A DOG OF FLANDERS &c

Illustrated by
MARIA L. KIRK

A DOG OF FLANDERS
THE NÜRNBERG STOVE
AND OTHER STORIES

Hercules Scott Finlay

25th Dec

1913.

THEN LITTLE NELLO TOOK HIS PLACE BESIDE THE CART

Page 21

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THE NÜRNBERG STOVE
AND OTHER STORIES

BY

OUIDA

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY

MARIA L. KIRK

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CONTENTS

PAGE

A Dog of Flanders 9

The Nürnberg Stove 61

In the Apple-Country 131

The Little Earl 171

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

THEN LITTLE NELLO TOOK HIS PLACE BESIDE THE CART. . . . . *Frontispiece*

NELLO DREW THEIR LIKENESS WITH A STICK OF CHARCOAL 31

"IT IS A SIN; IT IS A THEFT; IT IS AN INFAMY," HE SAID. 83

AUGUST OPENED THE WINDOW, CRAMMED THE SNOW INTO HIS MOUTH AGAIN AND AGAIN 98

"LET US REST A LITTLE AND EAT" 133

SHE ONLY RAN ON, STUMBLING OFTEN AND FEELING FOR THE MATCHES IN THE BOSOM OF HER UGLY GRAY COTTON FROCK. 159

"LITTLE GIRL, WHY DO YOU CRY?" HE SAID. . . . 196

HE SHARED IT WILLINGLY. 221

A DOG OF FLANDERS

A DOG OF FLANDERS

A STORY OF NOËL.

NELLO and Patrasche were left all alone in the world.

They were friends in a friendship closer than brotherhood. Nello was a little Ardennois—Patrasche was a big Fleming. They were both of the same age by length of years, yet one was still young, and the other was already old. They had dwelt together almost all their days: both were orphaned and destitute, and owed their lives to the same hand. It had been the beginning of the tie between them, their first bond of sympathy; and it had strengthened day by day, and had grown with their growth, firm and indissoluble, until they loved one another very greatly.

Their home was a little hut on the edge of a little village—a Flemish village a league from Antwerp, set amidst flat breadths of pasture and corn-lands, with long lines of poplars and of alders bending in the

breeze on the edge of the great canal which ran through it. It had about a score of houses and homesteads, with shutters of bright green or sky-blue, and roofs rose-red or black and white, and walls whitewashed until they shone in the sun like snow. In the centre of the village stood a windmill, placed on a little moss-grown slope: it was a landmark to all the level country round. It had once been painted scarlet, sails and all, but that had been in its infancy, half a century or more earlier, when it had ground wheat for the soldiers of Napoleon; and it was now a ruddy brown, tanned by wind and weather. It went queerly by fits and starts, as though rheumatic and stiff in the joints from age, but it served the whole neighborhood, which would have thought it almost as impious to carry grain elsewhere as to attend any other religious service than the mass that was performed at the altar of the little old gray church, with its conical steeple, which stood opposite to it, and whose single bell rang morning, noon, and night with that strange, subdued, hollow sadness which every bell that hangs in the Low Countries seems to gain as an integral part of its melody.

Within sound of the little melancholy clock almost from their birth upward, they had dwelt together, Nello and Patrasche, in the little hut on the edge of the village, with the cathedral spire of Antwerp rising in the north-east, beyond the great green plain of seeding grass and spreading corn that stretched away from them like a tideless, changeless sea. It was the hut of a very old man, of a very poor man—of old Jehan Daas, who in his time had been a soldier, and who

remembered the wars that had trampled the country as oxen tread down the furrows, and who had brought from his service nothing except a wound, which had made him a cripple.

When old Jehan Daas had reached his full eighty, his daughter had died in the Ardennes, hard by Stavelot, and had left him in legacy her two-year-old son. The old man could ill contrive to support himself, but he took up the additional burden uncomplainingly, and it soon became welcome and precious to him. Little Nello—which was but a pet diminutive for Nicolas—throve with him, and the old man and the little child lived in the poor little hut contentedly.

It was a very humble little mud-hut indeed, but it was clean and white as a sea-shell, and stood in a small plot of garden-ground that yielded beans and herbs and pumpkins. They were very poor, terribly poor—many a day they had nothing at all to eat. They never by any chance had enough: to have had enough to eat would have been to have reached paradise at once. But the old man was very gentle and good to the boy, and the boy was a beautiful, innocent, truthful, tender-natured creature; and they were happy on a crust and a few leaves of cabbage, and asked no more of earth or heaven; save indeed that Patrasche should be always with them, since without Patrasche where would they have been?

For Patrasche was their alpha and omega; their treasury and granary; their store of gold and wand of wealth; their bread-winner and minister; their only friend and comforter. Patrasche dead or gone from

them, they must have laid themselves down and died likewise. Patrasche was body, brains, hands, head, and feet to both of them: Patrasche was their very life, their very soul. For Jehan Daas was old and a cripple, and Nello was but a child; and Patrasche was their dog.

A dog of Flanders—yellow of hide, large of head and limb, with wolf-like ears that stood erect, and legs bowed and feet widened in the muscular development wrought in his breed by many generations of hard service. Patrasche came of a race which had toiled hard and cruelly from sire to son in Flanders many a century—slaves of slaves, dogs of the people, beasts of the shafts and the harness, creatures that lived straining their sinews in the gall of the cart, and died breaking their hearts on the flints of the streets.

Patrasche had been born of parents who had labored hard all their days over the sharp-set stones of the various cities and the long, shadowless, weary roads of the two Flanders and of Brabant. He had been born to no other heritage than those of pain and of toil. He had been fed on curses and baptized with blows. Why not? It was a Christian country, and Patrasche was but a dog. Before he was fully grown he had known the bitter gall of the cart and the collar. Before he had entered his thirteenth month he had become the property of a hardware-dealer, who was accustomed to wander over the land north and south, from the blue sea to the green mountains. They sold him for a small price, because he was so young.

This man was a drunkard and a brute. The life of

Patrasche was a life of hell. To deal the tortures of hell on the animal creation is a way which the Christians have of showing their belief in it. His purchaser was a sullen, ill-living, brutal Brabantois, who heaped his cart full with pots and pans and flagons and buckets, and other wares of crockery and brass and tin, and left Patrasche to draw the load as best he might, whilst he himself lounged idly by the side in fat and sluggish ease, smoking his black pipe and stopping at every wineshop or café on the road.

Happily for Patrasche—or unhappily—he was very strong: he came of an iron race, long born and bred to such cruel travail; so that he did not die, but managed to drag on a wretched existence under the brutal burdens, the scarifying lashes, the hunger, the thirst, the blows, the curses, and the exhaustion which are the only wages with which the Flemings repay the most patient and laborious of all their four-footed victims. One day, after two years of this long and deadly agony, Patrasche was going on as usual along one of the straight, dusty, unlovely roads that lead to the city of Rubens. It was full midsummer, and very warm. His cart was very heavy, piled high with goods in metal and in earthenware. His owner sauntered on without noticing him otherwise than by the crack of the whip as it curled round his quivering loins. The Brabantois had paused to drink beer himself at every wayside house, but he had forbidden Patrasche to stop a moment for a draught from the canal. Going along thus, in the full sun, on a scorching highway, having eaten nothing for twenty-four

hours, and, which was far worse to him, not having tasted water for near twelve, being blind with dust, sore with blows, and stupefied with the merciless weight which dragged upon his loins, Patrasche, for once, staggered and foamed a little at the mouth, and fell.

He fell in the middle of the white, dusty road, in the full glare of the sun; he was sick unto death, and motionless. His master gave him the only medicine in his pharmacy—kicks and oaths and blows with a cudgel of oak, which had been often the only food and drink, the only wage and reward, ever offered to him. But Patrasche was beyond the reach of any torture or of any curses. Patrasche lay, dead to all appearances, down in the white powder of the summer dust. After a while, finding it useless to assail his ribs with punishment and his ears with maledictions, the Brabantois—deeming life gone in him, or going so nearly that his carcass was forever useless, unless indeed some one should strip it of the skin for gloves—cursed him fiercely in farewell, struck off the leathern bands of the harness, kicked his body heavily aside into the grass, and, groaning and muttering in savage wrath, pushed the cart lazily along the road up-hill, and left the dying dog there for the ants to sting and for the crows to pick.

It was the last day before Kermesse away at Louvain, and the Brabantois was in haste to reach the fair and get a good place for his truck of brass wares. He was in fierce wrath, because Patrasche had been a strong and much-enduring animal, and because he himself had now the hard task of pushing his charette

all the way to Louvain. But to stay to look after Patrasche never entered his thoughts: the beast was dying and useless, and he would steal, to replace him, the first large dog that he found wandering alone out of sight of its master. Patrasche had cost him nothing, or next to nothing, and for two long, cruel years had made him toil ceaselessly in his service from sunrise to sunset, through summer and winter, in fair weather and foul.

He had got a fair use and a good profit out of Patrasche: being human, he was wise, and left the dog to draw his last breath alone in the ditch, and have his bloodshot eyes plucked out as they might be by the birds, whilst he himself went on his way to beg and to steal, to eat and to drink, to dance and to sing, in the mirth at Louvain. A dying dog, a dog of the cart—why should he waste hours over its agonies at peril of losing a handful of copper coins, at peril of a shout of laughter?

Patrasche lay there, flung in the grass-green ditch. It was a busy road that day, and hundreds of people, on foot and on mules, in wagons or in carts, went by, tramping quickly and joyously on to Louvain. Some saw him, most did not even look: all passed on. A dead dog more or less—it was nothing in Brabant: it would be nothing anywhere in the world.

After a time, among the holiday-makers, there came a little old man who was bent and lame, and very feeble. He was in no guise for feasting: he was very poorly and miserably clad, and he dragged his silent way slowly through the dust among the pleasure-

seekers. He looked at Patrasche, paused, wondered, turned aside, then kneeled down in the rank grass and weeds of the ditch, and surveyed the dog with kindly eyes of pity. There was with him a little rosy, fair-haired, dark-eyed child of a few years old, who pattered in amidst the bushes, that were for him breast-high, and stood gazing with a pretty seriousness upon the poor, great, quiet beast.

Thus it was that these two first met—the little Nello and the big Patrasche.

The upshot of that day was, that old Jehan Daas, with much laborious effort, drew the sufferer homeward to his own little hut, which was a stone's throw off amidst the fields, and there tended him with so much care that the sickness, which had been a brain seizure, brought on by heat and thirst and exhaustion, with time and shade and rest passed away, and health and strength returned, and Patrasche staggered up again upon his four stout, tawny legs.

Now for many weeks he had been useless, powerless, sore, near to death; but all this time he had heard no rough word, had felt no harsh touch, but only the pitying murmurs of the little child's voice and the soothing caress of the old man's hand.

In his sickness they too had grown to care for him, this lonely old man and the little happy child. He had a corner of the hut, with a heap of dry grass for his bed; and they had learned to listen eagerly for his breathing in the dark night, to tell them that he lived; and when he first was well enough to essay a loud, hollow, broken bay, they laughed aloud, and almost

wept together for joy at such a sign of his sure restoration; and little Nello, in delighted glee, hung round his rugged neck with chains of marguerites, and kissed him with fresh and ruddy lips.

So then, when Patrasche arose, himself again, strong, big, gaunt, powerful, his great wistful eyes had a gentle astonishment in them that there were no curses to rouse him and no blows to drive him; and his heart awakened to a mighty love, which never wavered once in its fidelity whilst life abode with him.

But Patrasche, being a dog, was grateful. Patrasche lay pondering long with grave, tender, musing brown eyes, watching the movements of his friends.

Now, the old soldier, Jehan Daas, could do nothing for his living but limp about a little with a small cart, with which he carried daily the milk-cans of those happier neighbors who owned cattle away into the town of Antwerp. The villagers gave him the employment a little out of charity—more because it suited them well to send their milk into the town by so honest a carrier, and bide at home themselves to look after their gardens, their cows, their poultry, or their little fields. But it was becoming hard work for the old man. He was eighty-three, and Antwerp was a good league off, or more.

Patrasche watched the milk-cans come and go that one day when he had got well and was lying in the sun with the wreath of marguerites round his tawny neck.

The next morning, Patrasche, before the old man had touched the cart, arose and walked to it and placed

himself betwixt its handles, and testified as plainly as dumb show could do his desire and his ability to work in return for the bread of charity that he had eaten. Jehan Daas resisted long, for the old man was one of those who thought it a foul shame to bind dogs to labor for which Nature never formed them. But Patrasche would not be gainsaid: finding they did not harness him, he tried to draw the cart onward with his teeth.

At length Jehan Daas gave way, vanquished by the persistence and the gratitude of this creature whom he had succored. He fashioned his cart so that Patrasche could run in it, and this he did every morning of his life thenceforward.

When the winter came, Jehan Daas thanked the blessed fortune that had brought him to the dying dog in the ditch that fair-day of Louvain; for he was very old, and he grew feebler with each year, and he would ill have known how to pull his load of milk-cans over the snows and through the deep ruts in the mud if it had not been for the strength and the industry of the animal he had befriended. As for Patrasche, it seemed heaven to him. After the frightful burdens that his old master had compelled him to strain under, at the call of the whip at every step, it seemed nothing to him but amusement to step out with this little light green cart, with its bright brass cans, by the side of the gentle old man who always paid him with a tender caress and with a kindly word. Besides, his work was over by three or four in the day, and after that time he was free to do as he would—to stretch himself, to

sleep in the sun, to wander in the fields, to romp with the young child, or to play with his fellow-dogs. Patrasche was very happy.

Fortunately for his peace, his former owner was killed in a drunken brawl at the Kermesse of Mechlin, and so sought not after him nor disturbed him in his new and well-loved home.

A few years later, old Jehan Daas, who had always been a cripple, became so paralyzed with rheumatism that it was impossible for him to go out with the cart any more. Then little Nello, being now grown to his sixth year of age, and knowing the town well from having accompanied his grandfather so many times, took his place beside the cart, and sold the milk and received the coins in exchange, and brought them back to their respective owners with a pretty grace and seriousness which charmed all who beheld him.

The little Ardennois was a beautiful child, with dark, grave, tender eyes, and a lovely bloom upon his face, and fair locks that clustered to his throat; and many an artist sketched the group as it went by him—the green cart with the brass flagons of Teniers and Mieris and Van Tal, and the great tawny-colored, massive dog, with his belled harness that chimed cheerily as he went, and the small figure that ran beside him which had little white feet in great wooden shoes, and a soft, grave, innocent, happy face like the little fair children of Rubens.

Nello and Patrasche did the work so well and so joyfully together that Jehan Daas himself, when the summer came and he was better again, had no need to

stir out, but could sit in the doorway in the sun and see them go forth through the garden wicket, and then doze and dream and pray a little, and then awake again as the clock tolled three and watch for their return. And on their return Patrasche would shake himself free of his harness with a bay of glee, and Nello would recount with pride the doings of the day; and they would all go in together to their meal of rye bread and milk or soup, and would see the shadows lengthen over the great plain, and see the twilight veil the fair cathedral spire; and then lie down together to sleep peacefully while the old man said a prayer.

So the days and the years went on, and the lives of Nello and Patrasche were happy, innocent, and healthful.

In the spring and summer especially were they glad. Flanders is not a lovely land, and around the burgh of Rubens it is perhaps least lovely of all. Corn and colza, pasture and plough, succeed each other on the characterless plain in wearying repetition, and save by some gaunt gray tower, with its peal of pathetic bells, or some figure coming athwart the fields, made picturesque by a gleaner's bundle or a woodman's fagot, there is no change, no variety, no beauty anywhere; and he who has dwelt upon the mountains or amidst the forests feels oppressed as by imprisonment with the tedium and the endlessness of that vast and dreary level. But it is green and very fertile, and it has wide horizons that have a certain charm of their own even in their dulness and monotony; and among the rushes by the water-side the flowers grow, and the trees

rise tall and fresh where the barges glide with their great hulks black against the sun, and their little green barrels and vari-colored flags gay against the leaves. Anyway, there is greenery and breadth of space enough to be as good as beauty to a child and a dog; and these two asked no better, when their work was done, than to lie buried in the lush grasses on the side of the canal, and watch the cumbrous vessels drifting by and bringing the crisp salt smell of the sea among the blossoming scents of the country summer.

True, in the winter it was harder, and they had to rise in the darkness and the bitter cold, and they had seldom as much as they could have eaten any day, and the hut was scarce better than a shed when the nights were cold, although it looked so pretty in warm weather, buried in a great kindly-clambering vine, that never bore fruit, indeed, but which covered it with luxuriant green tracery all through the months of blossom and harvest. In winter the winds found many holes in the walls of the poor little hut, and the vine was black and leafless, and the bare lands looked very bleak and drear without, and sometimes within the floor was flooded and then frozen. In winter it was hard, and the snow numbed the little white limbs of Nello, and the icicles cut the brave, untiring feet of Patrasche.

But even then they were never heard to lament, either of them. The child's wooden shoes and the dog's four legs would trot manfully together over the frozen fields to the chime of the bells on the harness; and then sometimes, in the streets of Antwerp, some housewife would bring them a bowl of soup and a

handful of bread, or some kindly trader would throw some billets of fuel into the little cart as it went homeward, or some woman in their own village would bid them keep some share of the milk they carried for their own food; and then they would run over the white lands, through the early darkness, bright and happy, and burst with a shout of joy into their home.

So, on the whole, it was well with them, very well; and Patrasche, meeting on the highway or in the public streets the many dogs who toiled from daybreak into nightfall, paid only with blows and curses, and loosened from the shafts with a kick to starve and freeze as best they might—Patrasche in his heart was very grateful to his fate, and thought it the fairest and the kindliest the world could hold. Though he was often very hungry indeed when he lay down at night; though he had to work in the heats of summer noons and the rasping chills of winter dawns; though his feet were often tender with wounds from the sharp edges of the jagged pavement; though he had to perform tasks beyond his strength and against his nature—yet he was grateful and content: he did his duty with each day, and the eyes that he loved smiled down on him. It was sufficient for Patrasche.

There was only one thing which caused Patrasche any uneasiness in his life, and it was this. Antwerp, as all the world knows, is full at every turn of old piles of stones, dark and ancient and majestic, standing in crooked courts, jammed against gateways and taverns, rising by the water's edge, with bells ringing above them in the air, and ever and again out of their arched

doors a swell of music pealing. There they remain, the grand old sanctuaries of the past, shut in amidst the squalor, the hurry, the crowds, the unloveliness, and the commerce of the modern world, and all day long the clouds drift and the birds circle and the winds sigh around them, and beneath the earth at their feet there sleeps—RUBENS.

And the greatness of the mighty Master still rests upon Antwerp, and wherever we turn in its narrow streets his glory lies therein, so that all mean things are thereby transfigured; and as we pace slowly through the winding ways, and by the edge of the stagnant water, and through the noisome courts, his spirit abides with us, and the heroic beauty of his visions is about us, and the stones that once felt his footsteps and bore his shadow seem to arise and speak of him with living voices. For the city which is the tomb of Rubens still lives to us through him, and him alone.

It is so quiet there by that great white sepulchre—so quiet, save only when the organ peals and the choir cries aloud the Salve Regina or the Kyrie Eleison. Sure no artist ever had a greater gravestone than that pure marble sanctuary gives to him in the heart of his birthplace in the chancel of St. Jacques.

Without Rubens, what were Antwerp? A dirty, dusky, bustling mart, which no man would ever care to look upon save the traders who do business on its wharves. With Rubens, to the whole world of men it is a sacred name, a sacred soil, a Bethlehem where a god of Art saw light, a Golgotha where a god of Art lies dead.

O nations! closely should you treasure your great men, for by them alone will the future know of you. Flanders in her generations has been wise. In his life she glorified this greatest of her sons, and in his death she magnifies his name. But her wisdom is very rare.

Now, the trouble of Patrasche was this. Into these great, sad piles of stones, that reared their melancholy majesty above the crowded roofs, the child Nello would many and many a time enter, and disappear through their dark arched portals, whilst Patrasche, left without upon the pavement, would wearily and vainly ponder on what could be the charm which thus allured from him his inseparable and beloved companion. Once or twice he did essay to see for himself, clattering up the steps with his milk-cart behind him; but thereon he had been always sent back again summarily by a tall custodian in black clothes and silver chains of office; and fearful of bringing his little master into trouble, he desisted, and remained couched patiently before the churches until such time as the boy reappeared. It was not the fact of his going into them which disturbed Patrasche: he knew that people went to church: all the village went to the small, tumbledown, gray pile opposite the red windmill. What troubled him was that little Nello always looked strangely when he came out, always very flushed or very pale; and whenever he returned home after such visitations would sit silent and dreaming, not caring to play, but gazing out at the evening skies beyond the line of the canal, very subdued and almost sad.

What was it? wondered Patrasche. He thought it

could not be good or natural for the little lad to be so grave, and in his dumb fashion he tried all he could to keep Nello by him in the sunny fields or in the busy market-place. But to the churches Nello would go: most often of all would he go to the great cathedral; and Patrasche, left without on the stones by the iron fragments of Quentin Matsys's gate, would stretch himself and yawn and sigh, and even howl now and then, all in vain, until the doors closed and the child perforce came forth again, and winding his arms about the dog's neck would kiss him on his broad, tawny-colored forehead, and murmur always the same words: "If I could only see them, Patrasche!—if I could only see them!"

What were they? pondered Patrasche, looking up with large, wistful, sympathetic eyes.

One day, when the custodian was out of the way and the doors left ajar, he got in for a moment after his little friend and saw. "They" were two great covered pictures on either side of the choir.

Nello was kneeling, rapt as in an ecstasy, before the altar-picture of the Assumption, and when he noticed Patrasche, and rose and drew the dog gently out into the air, his face was wet with tears, and he looked up at the veiled places as he passed them, and murmured to his companion, "It is so terrible not to see them, Patrasche, just because one is poor and cannot pay! He never meant that the poor should not see them when he painted them, I am sure. He would have had us see them any day, every day: that I am sure. And they keep them shrouded there—shrouded in the dark, the beautiful things!—and they never feel the light, and

no eyes look on them, unless rich people come and pay If I could only see them, I would be content to die."

But he could not see them, and Patrasche could not help him, for to gain the silver piece that the church exacts as the price for looking on the glories of the Elevation of the Cross and the Descent of the Cross was a thing as utterly beyond the powers of either of them as it would have been to scale the heights of the cathedral spire. They had never so much as a sou to spare: if they cleared enough to get a little wood for the stove, a little broth for the pot, it was the utmost they could do. And yet the heart of the child was set in sore and endless longing upon beholding the greatness of the two veiled Rubens.

The whole soul of the little Ardennois thrilled and stirred with an absorbing passion for Art. Going on his ways through the old city in the early days before the sun or the people had risen, Nello, who looked only a little peasant-boy, with a great dog drawing milk to sell from door to door, was in a heaven of dreams whereof Rubens was the god. Nello, cold and hungry, with stockingless feet in wooden shoes, and the winter winds blowing among his curls and lifting his poor thin garments, was in a rapture of meditation, wherein all that he saw was the beautiful fair face of the Mary of the Assumption, with the waves of her golden hair lying upon her shoulders, and the light of an eternal sun shining down upon her brow. Nello, reared in poverty, and buffeted by fortune, and untaught in letters, and unheeded by men, had the compensation or the curse which is called Genius.

No one knew it. He as little as any. No one knew it. Only indeed Patrasche, who, being with him always, saw him draw with chalk upon the stones any and every thing that grew or breathed, heard him on his little bed of hay murmur all manner of timid, pathetic prayers to the spirit of the great Master; watched his gaze darken and his face radiate at the evening glow of sunset or the rosy rising of the dawn; and felt many and many a time the tears of a strange, nameless pain and joy, mingled together, fall hotly from the bright young eyes upon his own wrinkled yellow forehead.

"I should go to my grave quite content if I thought, Nello, that when thou growest a man thou couldst own this hut and the little plot of ground, and labor for thyself, and be called Baas by thy neighbors," said the old man Jehan many an hour from his bed. For to own a bit of soil, and to be called Baas—master—by the hamlet round, is to have achieved the highest ideal of a Flemish peasant; and the old soldier, who had wandered over all the earth in his youth, and had brought nothing back, deemed in his old age that to live and die on one spot in contented humility was the fairest fate he could desire for his darling. But Nello said nothing.

The same leaven was working in him that in other times begat Rubens and Jordaens and the Van Eycks, and all their wondrous tribe, and in times more recent begat in the green country of the Ardennes, where the Meuse washes the old walls of Dijon, the great artist of the Patroclus, whose genius is too near us for us aright to measure its divinity.

Nello dreamed of other things in the future than of tilling the little rood of earth, and living under the wattle roof, and being called Baas by neighbors a little poorer or a little less poor than himself. The cathedral spire, where it rose beyond the fields in the ruddy evening skies or in the dim, gray, misty mornings, said other things to him than this. But these he told only to Patrasche, whispering, childlike, his fancies in the dog's ear when they went together at their work through the fogs of the daybreak, or lay together at their rest among the rustling rushes by the water's side.

For such dreams are not easily shaped into speech to awake the slow sympathies of human auditors; and they would only have sorely perplexed and troubled the poor old man bedridden in his corner, who, for his part, whenever he had trodden the streets of Antwerp, had thought the daub of blue and red that they called a Madonna, on the walls of the wine-shop where he drank his sou's worth of black beer, quite as good as any of the famous altar-pieces for which the stranger folk travelled far and wide into Flanders from every land on which the good sun shone.

There was only one other beside Patrasche to whom Nello could talk at all of his daring fantasies. This other was little Alois, who lived at the old red mill on the grassy mound, and whose father, the miller, was the best-to-do husbandman in all the village. Little Alois was only a pretty baby with soft round, rosy features, made lovely by those sweet dark eyes that the Spanish rule has left in so many a Flemish face, in

NELLO DREW THEIR LIKENESS WITH A STICK OF CHARCOAL

testimony of the Alvan dominion, as Spanish art has left broadsown throughout the country majestic palaces and stately courts, gilded house-fronts and sculptured lintels—histories in blazonry and poems in stone.

Little Alois was often with Nello and Patrasche. They played in the fields, they ran in the snow, they gathered the daisies and bilberries, they went up to the old gray church together, and they often sat together by the broad wood-fire in the mill-house. Little Alois, indeed, was the richest child in the hamlet. She had neither brother nor sister; her blue serge dress had never a hole in it; at Kermesse she had as many gilded nuts and Agni Dei in sugar as her hands could hold; and when she went up for her first communion her flaxen curls were covered with a cap of richest Mechlin lace, which had been her mother's and her grandmother's before it came to her. Men spoke already, though she had but twelve years, of the good wife she would be for their sons to woo and win; but she herself was a little gay, simple child, in nowise conscious of her heritage, and she loved no playfellows so well as Jehan Daas's grandson and his dog.

One day her father, Baas Cogez, a good man, but somewhat stern, came on a pretty group in the long meadow behind the mill, where the aftermath had that day been cut. It was his little daughter sitting amidst the hay, with the great tawny head of Patrasche on her lap, and many wreaths of poppies and blue cornflowers round them both: on a clean smooth slab of pine wood the boy Nello drew their likeness with a stick of charcoal.

The miller stood and looked at the portrait with tears in his eyes, it was so strangely like, and he loved his only child closely and well. Then he roughly chid the little girl for idling there whilst her mother needed her within, and sent her indoors crying and afraid: then, turning, he snatched the wood from Nello's hands. "Dost do much of such folly?" he asked, but there was a tremble in his voice.

Nello colored and hung his head. "I draw everything I see," he murmured.

The miller was silent: then he stretched his hand out with a franc in it. "It is folly, as I say, and evil waste of time: nevertheless, it is like Alois, and will please the house-mother. Take this silver bit for it and leave it for me."

The color died out of the face of the young Ardennois; he lifted his head and put his hands behind his back. "Keep your money and the portrait both, Baas Cogez," he said, simply. "You have been often good to me." Then he called Patrasche to him, and walked away across the field.

"I could have seen them with that franc," he murmured to Patrasche, "but I could not sell her picture—not even for them."

Bass Cogez went into his mill-house sore troubled in his mind. "That lad must not be so much with Alois," he said to his wife that night. "Trouble may come of it hereafter: he is fifteen now, and she is twelve; and the boy is comely of face and form."

"And he is a good lad and a loyal," said the housewife, feasting her eyes on the piece of pine wood where

it was throned above the chimney with a cuckoo clock in oak and a Calvary in wax.

"Yea, I do not gainsay that," said the miller, draining his pewter flagon.

"Then, if what you think of were ever to come to pass," said the wife, hesitatingly, "would it matter so much? She will have enough for both, and one cannot be better than happy."

"You are a woman, and therefore a fool," said the miller, harshly, striking his pipe on the table. "The lad is naught but a beggar, and, with these painter's fancies, worse than a beggar. Have a care that the are not together in the future, or I will send the child to the surer keeping of the nuns of the Sacred Heart.

The poor mother was terrified, and promised humbly to do his will. Not that she could bring herself altogether to separate the child from her favorite playmate, nor did the miller even desire that extreme of cruelty to a young lad who was guilty of nothing except poverty. But there were many ways in which little Alois was kept away from her chosen companion; and Nello, being a boy proud and quiet and sensitive, was quickly wounded, and ceased to turn his own steps and those of Patrasche, as he had been used to do with every moment of leisure, to the old red mill upon the slope. What his offence was he did not know: he supposed he had in some manner angered Baas Cogez by taking the portrait of Alois in the meadow; and when the child who loved him would run to him and nestle her hand in his, he would smile at her very sadly and say with a tender concern for her before himself,

"Nay, Alois, do not anger your father. He thinks that I make you idle, dear, and he is not pleased that you should be with me. He is a good man and loves you well: we will not anger him, Alois."

But it was with a sad heart that he said it, and the earth did not look so bright to him as it had used to do when he went out at sunrise under the poplars down the straight roads with Patrasche. The old red mill had been a landmark to him, and he had been used to pause by it, going and coming, for a cheery greeting with its people as her little flaxen head rose above the low mill-wicket, and her little rosy hands had held out a bone or a crust to Patrasche. Now the dog looked wistfully at a closed door, and the boy went on without pausing, with a pang at his heart, and the child sat within with tears dropping slowly on the knitting to which she was set on her little stool by the stove; and Baas Cogez, working among his sacks and his mill-gear, would harden his will and say to himself, "It is best so. The lad is all but a beggar, and full of idle, dreaming fooleries. Who knows what mischief might not come of it in the future?" So he was wise in his generation, and would not have the door unbarred, except upon rare and formal occasions, which seemed to have neither warmth nor mirth in them to the two children, who had been accustomed so long to a daily gleeful, careless, happy interchange of greeting, speech, and pastime, with no other watcher of their sports or auditor of their fancies than Patrasche, sagely shaking the brazen bells of his collar and responding with all a dog's swift sympathies to their every change of mood.

All this while the little panel of pine wood remained over the chimney in the mill-kitchen with the cuckoo clock and the waxen Calvary, and sometimes it seemed to Nello a little hard that whilst his gift was accepted he himself should be denied.

But he did not complain: it was his habit to be quiet: old Jehan Daas had said ever to him, "We are poor: we must take what God sends—the ill with the good: the poor cannot choose."

To which the boy had always listened in silence, being reverent of his old grandfather; but nevertheless a certain vague, sweet hope, such as beguiles the children of genius, had whispered in his heart, "Yet the poor do choose sometimes—choose to be great, so that men cannot say them nay." And he thought so still in his innocence; and one day, when the little Alois, finding him by chance alone among the cornfields by the canal, ran to him and held him close, and sobbed piteously because the morrow would be her saint's day, and for the first time in all her life her parents had failed to bid him to the little supper and romp in the great barns with which her feast-day was always celebrated, Nello had kissed her and murmured to her in firm faith, "It shall be different one day, Alois. One day that little bit of pine wood that your father has of mine shall be worth its weight in silver; and he will not shut the door against me then. Only love me always, dear little Alois, only love me always, and I will be great."

"And if I do not love you?" the pretty child asked, pouting a little through her tears, and moved by the instinctive coquetries of her sex.

Nello's eyes left her face and wandered to the distance, where in the red and gold of the Flemish night the cathedral spire rose. There was a smile on his face so sweet and yet so sad that little Alois was awed by it. "I will be great still," he said under his breath—"great still, or die, Alois."

"You do not love me," said the little spoilt child, pushing him away; but the boy shook his head and smiled, and went on his way through the tall yellow corn, seeing as in a vision some day in a fair future when he should come into that old familiar land and ask Alois of her people, and be not refused or denied, but received in honor, whilst the village folk should throng to look upon him and say in one another's ears, "Dost see him? He is a king among men, for he is a great artist and the world speaks his name; and yet he was only our poor little Nello, who was a beggar, as one may say, and only got his bread by the help of his dog." And he thought how he would fold his grandsire in furs and purples, and portray him as the old man is portrayed in the Family in the chapel of St. Jacques; and of how he would hang the throat of Patrasche with a collar of gold, and place him on his right hand, and say to the people, "This was once my only friend;" and of how he would build himself a great white marble palace, and make to himself luxuriant gardens of pleasure, on the slope looking outward to where the cathedral spire rose, and not dwell in it himself, but summon to it, as to a home, all men young and poor and friendless, but of the will to do mighty things; and of how he would say to them always, if they sought to

bless his name, "Nay, do not thank me—thank Rubens. Without him, what should I have been?" And these dreams, beautiful, impossible, innocent, free of all selfishness, full of heroical worship, were so closely about him as he went that he was happy—happy even on this sad anniversary of Alois's saint's day, when he and Patrasche went home by themselves to the little dark hut and the meal of black bread, whilst in the mill-house all the children of the village sang and laughed, and ate the big round cakes of Dijon and the almond gingerbread of Brabant, and danced in the great barn to the light of the stars and the music of flute and fiddle.

"Never mind, Patrasche," he said, with his arms round the dog's neck as they both sat in the door of the hut, where the sounds of the mirth at the mill came down to them on the night air—"never mind. It shall all be changed by and by."

He believed in the future: Patrasche, of more experience and of more philosophy, thought that the loss of the mill supper in the present was ill compensated by dreams of milk and honey in some vague hereafter. And Patrasche growled whenever he passed by Baas Cogez.

"This is Alois's name-day, is it not?" said the old man Daas that night from the corner where he was stretched upon his bed of sacking.

The boy gave a gesture of assent: he wished that the old man's memory had erred a little, instead of keeping such sure account.

"And why not there?" his grandfather pursued "Thou hast never missed a year before, Nello"

"Thou art too sick to leave," murmured the lad, bending his handsome young head over the bed.

"Tut! tut! Mother Nulette would have come and sat with me, as she does scores of times. What is the cause, Nello?" the old man persisted. "Thou surely hast not had ill words with the little one?"

"Nay, grandfather—never," said the boy quickly, with a hot color in his bent face. "Simply and truly, Baas Cogez did not have me asked this year. He has taken some whim against me."

"But thou hast done nothing wrong?"

"That I know—nothing. I took the portrait of Alois on a piece of pine: that is all."

"Ah!" The old man was silent: the truth suggested itself to him with the boy's innocent answer. He was tied to a bed of dried leaves in the corner of a wattle hut, but he had not wholly forgotten what the ways of the world were like.

He drew Nello's fair head fondly to his breast with a tenderer gesture. "Thou art very poor, my child," he said with a quiver the more in his aged, trembling voice—"so poor! It is very hard for thee."

"Nay, I am rich," murmured Nello; and in his innocence he thought so—rich with the imperishable powers that are mightier than the might of kings. And he went and stood by the door of the hut in the quiet autumn night, and watched the stars troop by and the tall poplars bend and shiver in the wind. All the casements of the mill-house were lighted, and every now and then the notes of the flute came to him. The tears fell down his cheeks, for he was but a child, yet

he smiled, for he said to himself, "In the future!" He stayed there until all was quite still and dark, then he and Patrasche went within and slept together, long and deeply, side by side.

Now he had a secret which only Patrasche knew. There was a little out-house to the hut, which no one entered but himself—a dreary place, but with abundant clear light from the north. Here he had fashioned himself rudely an easel in rough lumber, and here on a great gray sea of stretched paper he had given shape to one of the innumerable fancies which possessed his brain. No one had ever taught him anything; colors he had no means to buy; he had gone without bread many a time to procure even the few rude vehicles that he had here; and it was only in black or white that he could fashion the things he saw. This great figure which he had drawn here in chalk was only an old man sitting on a fallen tree—only that. He had seen old Michel the woodman sitting so at evening many a time. He had never had a soul to tell him of outline or perspective, of anatomy or of shadow, and yet he had given all the weary, worn-out age, all the sad, quiet patience, all the rugged, careworn pathos of his original, and given them so that the old lonely figure was a poem, sitting there, meditative and alone, on the dead tree, with the darkness of the descending night behind him.

It was rude, of course, in a way, and had many faults, no doubt; and yet it was real, true in nature, true in art, and very mournful, and in a manner beautiful.

Patrasche had lain quiet countless hours watching its gradual creation after the labor of each day was done, and he knew that Nello had a hope—vain and wild perhaps, but strongly cherished—of sending this great drawing to compete for a prize of two hundred francs a year which it was announced in Antwerp would be open to every lad of talent, scholar or peasant, under eighteen, who would attempt to win it with some unaided work of chalk or pencil. Three of the foremost artists in the town of Rubens were to be the judges and elect the victor according to his merits.

All the spring and summer and autumn Nello had been at work upon this treasure, which, if triumphant, would build him his first step toward independence and the mysteries of the art which he blindly, ignorantly, and yet passionately adored.

He said nothing to any one: his grandfather would not have understood, and little Alois was lost to him. Only to Patrasche he told all, and whispered, "Rubens would give it me, I think, if he knew."

Patrasche thought so too, for he knew that Rubens had loved dogs or he had never painted them with such exquisite fidelity; and men who loved dogs were, as Patrasche knew, always pitiful.

The drawings were to go in on the first day of December, and the decision be given on the twenty-fourth, so that he who should win might rejoice with all his people at the Christmas season.

In the twilight of a bitter wintry day, and with a beating heart, now quick with hope, now faint with fear, Nello placed the great picture on his little green

milk-cart, and took it, with the help of Patrasche, into the town, and there left it, as enjoined, at the doors of a public building.

"Perhaps it is worth nothing at all. How can I tell?" he thought, with the heart-sickness of a great timidity. Now that he had left it there, it seemed to him so hazardous, so vain, so foolish, to dream that he, a little lad with bare feet, who barely knew his letters, could do anything at which great painters, real artists, could ever deign to look. Yet he took heart as he went by the cathedral: the lordly form of Rubens seemed to rise from the fog and the darkness, and to loom in its magnificence before him, whilst the lips, with their kindly smile, seemed to him to murmur, "Nay, have courage! It was not by a weak heart and by faint fears that I wrote my name for all time upon Antwerp."

Nello ran home through the cold night, comforted. He had done his best: the rest must be as God willed, he thought, in that innocent, unquestioning faith which had been taught him in the little gray chapel among the willows and the poplar-trees.

The winter was very sharp already. That night, after they reached the hut, snow fell; and fell for very many days after that, so that the paths and the divisions in the fields were all obliterated, and all the smaller streams were frozen over, and the cold was intense upon the plains. Then, indeed, it became hard work to go round for the milk while the world was all dark, and carry it through the darkness to the silent town. Hard work, especially for Patrasche, for the passage

of the years, that were only bringing Nello a stronger youth, were bringing him old age, and his joints were stiff and his bones ached often. But he would never give up his share of the labor. Nello would fain have spared him and drawn the cart himself, but Patrasche would not allow it. All he would ever permit or accept was the help of a thrust from behind to the truck as it lumbered along through the ice-ruts. Patrasche had lived in harness, and he was proud of it. He suffered a great deal sometimes from frost, and the terrible roads, and the rheumatic pains of his limbs, but he only drew his breath hard and bent his stout neck, and trod onward with steady patience.

"Rest thee at home, Patrasche—it is time thou didst rest—and I can quite well push in the cart by myself," urged Nello many a morning; but Patrasche, who understood him aright, would no more have consented to stay at home than a veteran soldier to shirk when the charge was sounding; and every day he would rise and place himself in his shafts, and plod along over the snow through the fields that his four round feet had left their print upon so many, many years.

"One must never rest till one dies," thought Patrasche; and sometimes it seemed to him that that time of rest for him was not very far off. His sight was less clear than it had been, and it gave him pain to rise after the night's sleep, though he would never lie a moment in his straw when once the bell of the chapel tolling five let him know that the daybreak of labor had begun.

"My poor Patrasche, we shall soon lie quiet together,

you and I," said old Jehan Daas, stretching out to stroke the head of Patrasche with the old withered hand which had always shared with him its one poor crust of bread; and the hearts of the old man and the old dog ached together with one thought: When they were gone, who would care for their darling?

One afternoon, as they came back from Antwerp over the snow, which had become hard and smooth as marble over all the Flemish plains, they found dropped in the road a pretty little puppet, a tambourine-player, all scarlet and gold, about six inches high, and, unlike greater personages when Fortune lets them drop, quite unspoiled and unhurt by its fall. It was a pretty toy. Nello tried to find its owner, and, failing, thought that it was just the thing to please Alois.

It was quite night when he passed the mill-house: he knew the little window of her room. It could be no harm, he thought, if he gave her his little piece of treasure-trove, they had been playfellows so long. There was a shed with a sloping roof beneath her casement: he climbed it and tapped softly at the lattice: there was a little light within. The child opened it and looked out half frightened.

Nello put the tambourine-player into her hands. "Here is a doll I found in the snow, Alois. Take it," he whispered—"take it, and God bless thee, dear!"

He slid down from the shed-roof before she had time to thank him, and ran off through the darkness.

That night there was a fire at the mill. Out-buildings and much corn were destroyed, although the mill itself and the dwelling-house were unharmed. All the

village was out in terror, and engines came tearing through the snow from Antwerp. The miller was insured, and would lose nothing: nevertheless, he was in furious wrath, and declared aloud that the fire was due to no accident, but to some foul intent.

Nello, awakened from his sleep, ran to help with the rest: Baas Cogez thrust him angrily aside. "Thou wert loitering here after dark," he said roughly. "I believe, on my soul, that thou dost know more of the fire than any one."

Nello heard him in silence, stupefied, not supposing that any one could say such things except in jest, and not comprehending how any one could pass a jest at such a time.

Nevertheless, the miller said the brutal thing openly to many of his neighbors in the day that followed; and though no serious charge was ever preferred against the lad, it got bruited about that Nello had been seen in the mill-yard after dark on some unspoken errand, and that he bore Baas Cogez a grudge for forbidding his intercourse with little Alois; and so the hamlet, which followed the sayings of its richest landowner servilely, and whose families all hoped to secure the riches of Alois in some future time for their sons, took the hint to give grave looks and cold words to old Jehan Daas's grandson. No one said anything to him openly, but all the village agreed together to humor the miller's prejudice, and at the cottages and farms where Nello and Patrasche called every morning for the milk for Antwerp, downcast glances and brief phrases replaced to them the broad smiles and cheerful greetings to

which they had been always used. No one really credited the miller's absurd suspicion, nor the outrageous accusations born of them, but the people were all very poor and very ignorant, and the one rich man of the place had pronounced against him. Nello, in his innocence and his friendlessness, had no strength to stem the popular tide.

"Thou art very cruel to the lad," the miller's wife dared to say, weeping, to her lord. "Sure he is an innocent lad and a faithful, and would never dream of any such wickedness, however sore his heart might be."

But Baas Cogez being an obstinate man, having once said a thing held to it doggedly, though in his innermost soul he knew well the injustice that he was committing.

Meanwhile, Nello endured the injury done against him with a certain proud patience that disdained to complain: he only gave way a little when he was quite alone with old Patrasche. Besides, he thought, "If it should win! They will be sorry then, perhaps."

Still, to a boy not quite sixteen, and who had dwelt in one little world all his short life, and in his childhood had been caressed and applauded on all sides, it was a hard trial to have the whole of that little world turn against him for naught. Especially hard in that bleak, snow-bound, famine-stricken winter-time, when the only light and warmth there could be found abode beside the village hearths and in the kindly greetings of neighbors. In the winter-time all drew nearer to each other, all to all, except to Nello and Patrasche, with whom none now would have anything to do, and who were left to fare as they might with the old para-

lyzed, bedridden man in the little cabin, whose fire was often low, and whose board was often without bread, for there was a buyer from Antwerp who had taken to drive his mule in of a day for the milk of the various dairies, and there were only three or four of the people who had refused his terms of purchase and remained faithful to the little green cart. So that the burden which Patrasche drew had become very light, and the centime-pieces in Nello's pouch had become, alas! very small likewise.

The dog would stop, as usual, at all the familiar gates which were now closed to him, and look up at them with wistful, mute appeal; and it cost the neighbors a pang to shut their doors and their hearts, and let Patrasche draw his cart on again, empty. Nevertheless, they did it, for they desired to please Baas Cogez.

Noël was close at hand.

The weather was very wild and cold. The snow was six feet deep, and the ice was firm enough to bear oxen and men upon it everywhere. At this season the little village was always gay and cheerful. At the poorest dwelling there were possets and cakes, joking and dancing, sugared saints and gilded Jésus. The merry Flemish bells jingled everywhere on the horses; everywhere within doors some well-filled soup-pot sang and smoked over the stove; and everywhere over the snow without laughing maidens pattered in bright kerchiefs and stout kirtles, going to and from the mass. Only in the little hut it was very dark and very cold.

Nello and Patrasche were left utterly alone, for one night in the week before the Christmas Day, Death

entered there, and took away from life forever old Jehan Daas, who had never known of life aught save its poverty and its pains. He had long been half dead, incapable of any movement except a feeble gesture, and powerless for anything beyond a gentle word; and yet his loss fell on them both with a great horror in it: they mourned him passionately. He had passed away from them in his sleep, and when in the gray dawn they learned their bereavement, unutterable solitude and desolation seemed to close around them. He had long been only a poor, feeble, paralyzed old man, who could not raise a hand in their defence, but he had loved them well: his smile had always welcomed their return. They mourned for him unceasingly, refusing to be comforted, as in the white winter day they followed the deal shell that held his body to the nameless grave by the little gray church. They were his only mourners, these two whom he had left friendless upon earth—the young boy and the old dog.

"Surely, he will relent now and let the poor lad come hither?" thought the miller's wife, glancing at her husband where he smoked by the hearth.

Baas Cogez knew her thought, but he hardened his heart, and would not unbar his door as the little, humble funeral went by. "The boy is a beggar," he said to himself: "he shall not be about Alois."

The woman dared not say anything aloud, but when the grave was closed and the mourners had gone, she put a wreath of immortelles into Alois's hands and bade her go and lay it reverently on the dark, unmarked mound where the snow was displaced.

Nello and Patrasche went home with broken hearts. But even of that poor, melancholy, cheerless home they were denied the consolation. There was a month's rent over-due for their little home, and when Nello had paid the last sad service to the dead he had not a coin left. He went and begged grace of the owner of the hut, a cobbler who went every Sunday night to drink his pint of wine and smoke with Baas Cogez. The cobbler would grant no mercy. He was a harsh, miserly man, and loved money. He claimed in default of his rent every stick and stone, every pot and pan, in the hut, and bade Nello and Patrasche be out of it on the morrow.

Now, the cabin was lowly enough, and in some sense miserable enough, and yet their hearts clove to it with a great affection. They had been so happy there, and in the summer, with its clambering vine and its flowering beans, it was so pretty and bright in the midst of the sun-lighted fields! There life in it had been full of labor and privation, and yet they had been so well content, so gay of heart, running together to meet the old man's never-failing smile of welcome!

All night long the boy and the dog sat by the fireless hearth in the darkness, drawn close together for warmth and sorrow. Their bodies were insensible to the cold, but their hearts seemed frozen in them.

When the morning broke over the white, chill earth it was the morning of Christmas Eve. With a shudder, Nello clasped close to him his only friend, while his tears fell hot and fast on the dog's frank forehead. "Let us go, Patrasche—dear, dear Patrasche," he

murmured. "We will not wait to be kicked out: let us go."

Patrasche had no will but his, and they went sadly, side by side, out from the little place which was so dear to them both, and in which every humble, homely thing was to them precious and beloved. Patrasche drooped his head wearily as he passed by his own green cart: it was no longer his—it had to go with the rest to pay the rent, and his brass harness lay idle and glittering on the snow. The dog could have lain down beside it and died for very heart-sickness as he went, but whilst the lad lived and needed him Patrasche would not yield and give way.

They took the old accustomed road into Antwerp. The day had yet scarce more than dawned, most of the shutters were still closed, but some of the villagers were about. They took no notice whilst the dog and the boy passed by them. At one door Nello paused and looked wistfully within: his grandfather had done many a kindly turn in neighbor's service to the people who dwelt there.

"Would you give Patrasche a crust?" he said, timidly "He is old, and he has had nothing since last forenoon."

The woman shut the door hastily, murmuring some vague saying about wheat and rye being very dear that season. The boy and the dog went on again wearily: they asked no more.

By slow and painful ways they reached Antwerp as the chimes tolled ten.

"If I had anything about me I could sell to get him

bread!" thought Nello, but he had nothing except the wisp of linen and serge that covered him, and his pair of wooden shoes.

Patrasche understood, and nestled his nose into the lad's hand, as though to pray him not to be disquieted for any woe or want of his.

The winner of the drawing-prize was to be proclaimed at noon, and to the public building where he had left his treasure Nello made his way. On the steps and in the entrance-hall there was a crowd of youths —some of his age, some older, all with parents or relatives or friends. His heart was sick with fear as he went among them, holding Patrasche close to him. The great bells of the city clashed out the hour of noon with brazen clamor. The doors of the inner hall were opened; the eager, panting throng rushed in: it was known that the selected picture would be raised above the rest upon a wooden dais.

A mist obscured Nello's sight, his head swam, his limbs almost failed him. When his vision cleared he saw the drawing raised on high: it was not his own! A slow, sonorous voice was proclaiming aloud that victory had been adjudged to Stephan Kiesslinger, born in the burgh of Antwerp, son of a wharfinger in that town.

When Nello recovered his consciousness he was lying on the stones without, and Patrasche was trying with every art he knew to call him back to life. In the distance a throng of the youths of Antwerp were shouting around their successful comrade, and escorting him with acclamations to his home upon the quay

The boy staggered to his feet and drew the dog into his embrace. "It is all over, dear Patrasche," he murmured—"all over!"

He rallied himself as best he could, for he was weak from fasting, and retraced his steps to the village. Patrasche paced by his side with his head drooping and his old limbs feeble from hunger and sorrow.

The snow was falling fast: a keen hurricane blew from the north: it was bitter as death on the plains. It took them long to traverse the familiar path, and the bells were sounding four of the clock as they approached the hamlet. Suddenly Patrasche paused, arrested by a scent in the snow, scratched, whined, and draw out with his teeth a small case of brown leather. He held it up to Nello in the darkness. Where they were there stood a little Calvary, and a lamp burned dully under the cross: the boy mechanically turned the case to the light: on it was the name of Baas Cogez, and within it were notes for two thousand francs.

The sight roused the lad a little from his stupor. He thrust it in his shirt, and stroked Patrasche and drew him onward. The dog looked up wistfully in his face.

Nello made straight for the mill-house, and went to the house-door and struck on its panels. The miller's wife opened it weeping, with little Alois clinging close to her skirts. "Is it thee, thou poor lad?" she said kindly through her tears. "Get thee gone ere the Baas see thee. We are in sore trouble to-night. He is out seeking for a power of money that he has let fal. riding homeward, and in this snow he never will find

it; and God knows it will go nigh to ruin us. It is Heaven's own judgment for the things we have done to thee."

Nello put the note-case in her hand and called Patrasche within the house. "Patrasche found the money to-night," he said quickly. "Tell Baas Cogez so: I think he will not deny the dog shelter and food in his old age. Keep him from pursuing me, and I pray of you to be good to him."

Ere either woman or dog knew what he meant he had stooped and kissed Patrasche: then closed the door hurriedly, and disappeared in the gloom of the fast-falling night.

The woman and the child stood speechless with joy and fear: Patrasche vainly spent the fury of his anguish against the iron-bound oak of the barred house-door. They did not dare unbar the door and let him forth: they tried all they could to solace him. They brought him sweet cakes and juicy meats; they tempted him with the best they had; they tried to lure him to abide by the warmth of the hearth; but it was of no avail. Patrasche refused to be comforted or to stir from the barred portal.

It was six o'clock when from an opposite entrance the miller at last came, jaded and broken, into his wife's presence. "It is lost forever," he said with an ashen cheek and a quiver in his stern voice. "We have looked with lanterns everywhere: it is gone—the little maiden's portion and all!"

His wife put the money into his hand, and told him how it had come to her. The strong man sank trem-

bling into a seat and covered his face, ashamed and almost afraid. "I have been cruel to the lad," he muttered at length: "I deserved not to have good at his hands."

Little Alois, taking courage, crept close to her father and nestled against him her fair curly head. "Nello may come here again, father?" she whispered. "He may come to-morrow as he used to do?"

The miller pressed her in his arms: his hard, sunburned face was very pale and his mouth trembled. "Surely, surely," he answered his child. "He shall bide here on Christmas Day, and any other day he will. God helping me, I will make amends to the boy—I will make amends."

Little Alois kissed him in gratitude and joy, then slid from his knees and ran to where the dog kept watch by the door. "And to-night I may feast Patrasche?" she cried in a child's thoughtless glee.

Her father bent his head gravely: "Ay, ay: let the dog have the best;" for the stern old man was moved and shaken to his heart's depths.

It was Christmas Eve, and the mill-house was filled with oak logs and squares of turf, with cream and honey, with meat and bread, and the rafters were hung with wreaths of evergreen, and the Calvary and the cuckoo clock looked out from a mass of holly. There were little paper lanterns, too, for Alois, and toys of various fashions and sweetmeats in bright-pictured papers. There were light and warmth and abundance everywhere, and the child would fain have made the dog a guest honored and feasted.

But Patrasche would neither lie in the warmth nor share in the cheer. Famished he was and very cold, but without Nello he would partake neither of comfort nor food. Against all temptation he was proof, and close against the door he leaned always, watching only for a means of escape.

"He wants the lad," said Baas Cogez. "Good dog! good dog! I will go over to the lad the first thing at day-dawn." For no one but Patrasche knew that Nello had left the hut, and no one but Patrasche divined that Nello had gone to face starvation and misery alone.

The mill-kitchen was very warm: great logs crackled and flamed on the hearth; neighbors came in for a glass of wine and a slice of the fat goose baking for supper. Alois, gleeful and sure of her playmate back on the morrow, bounded and sang and tossed back her yellow hair. Baas Cogez, in the fulness of his heart, smiled on her through moistened eyes, and spoke of the way in which he would befriend her favorite companion; the house-mother sat with calm, contented face at the spinning-wheel; the cuckoo in the clock chirped mirthful hours. Amidst it all Patrasche was bidden with a thousand words of welcome to tarry there a cherished guest. But neither peace nor plenty could allure him where Nello was not.

When the supper smoked on the board, and the voices were loudest and gladdest, and the Christ-child brought choicest gifts to Alois, Patrasche, watching always an occasion, glided out when the door was unlatched by a careless new-comer, and as swiftly as his weak and tired limbs would bear him sped over the

snow in the bitter, black night. He had only one thought—to follow Nello. A human friend might have paused for the pleasant meal, the cheery warmth, the cosey slumber; but that was not the friendship of Patrasche. He remembered a bygone time, when an old man and a little child had found him sick unto death in the wayside ditch.

Snow had fallen freshly all the evening long; it was now nearly ten; the trail of the boy's footsteps was almost obliterated. It took Patrasche long to discover any scent. When at last he found it, it was lost again quickly, and lost and recovered, and again lost and again recovered, a hundred times or more.

The night was very wild. The lamps under the wayside crosses were blown out; the roads were sheets of ice; the impenetrable darkness hid every trace of habitations; there was no living thing abroad. All the cattle were housed, and in all the huts and homesteads men and women rejoiced and feasted. There was only Patrasche out in the cruel cold—old and famished and full of pain, but with the strength and the patience of a great love to sustain him in his search.

The trail of Nello's steps, faint and obscure as it was under the new snow, went straightly along the accustomed tracks into Antwerp. It was past midnight when Patrasche traced it over the boundaries of the town and into the narrow, tortuous, gloomy streets. It was all quite dark in the town, save where some light gleamed ruddily through the crevices of house-shutters, or some group went homeward with lanterns

chanting drinking-songs. The streets were all white with ice: the high walls and roofs loomed black against them. There was scarce a sound save the riot of the winds down the passages as they tossed the creaking signs and shook the tall lamp-irons.

So many passers-by had trodden through and through the snow, so many diverse paths had crossed and re-crossed each other, that the dog had a hard task to retain any hold on the track he followed. But he kept on his way, though the cold pierced him to the bone, and the jagged ice cut his feet, and the hunger in his body gnawed like a rat's teeth. He kept on his way, a poor gaunt, shivering thing, and by long patience traced the steps he loved into the very heart of the burgh and up to the steps of the great cathedral.

"He is gone to the things that he loved," thought Patrasche: he could not understand, but he was full of sorrow and of pity for the art-passion that to him was so incomprehensible and yet so sacred.

The portals of the cathedral were unclosed after the midnight mass. Some heedlessness in the custodians, too eager to go home and feast or sleep, or too drowsy to know whether they turned the keys aright, had left one of the doors unlocked. By that accident the foot-falls Patrasche sought had passed through into the building, leaving the white marks of snow upon the dark stone floor. By that slender white thread, frozen as it fell, he was guided through the intense silence, through the immensity of the vaulted space—guided straight to the gates of the chancel, and, stretched there upon the stones, he found Nello. He crept up and touched the

face of the boy. "Didst thou dream that I should be faithless and forsake thee? I—a dog?" said that mute caress.

The lad raised himself with a low cry and clasped him close. "Let us lie down and die together," he murmured. "Men have no need of us, and we are all alone."

In answer, Patrasche crept closer yet, and laid his head upon the young boy's breast. The great tears stood in his brown, sad eyes: not for himself—for himself he was happy.

They lay close together in the piercing cold. The blasts that blew over the Flemish dikes from the northern seas were like waves of ice, which froze every living thing they touched. The interior of the immense vault of stone in which they were was even more bitterly chill than the snow-covered plains without. Now and then a bat moved in the shadows—now and then a gleam of light came on the ranks of carven figures. Under the Rubens they lay together quite still, and soothed almost into a dreaming slumber by the numbing narcotic of the cold. Together they dreamed of the old glad days when they had chased each other through the flowering grasses of the summer meadows, or sat hidden in the tall bulrushes by the water's side, watching the boats go seaward in the sun.

Suddenly through the darkness a great white radiance streamed through the vastness of the aisles; the moon, that was at her height, had broken through the clouds, the snow had ceased to fall, the light reflected from the snow without was clear as the light of dawn.

It fell through the arches full upon the two pictures above, from which the boy on his entrance had flung back the veil: the Elevation and the Descent of the Cross were for one instant visible.

Nello rose to his feet and stretched his arms to them; the tears of a passionate ecstasy glistened on the paleness of his face. "I have seen them at last!" he cried aloud. "O God, it is enough!"

His limbs failed under him, and he sank upon his knees, still gazing upward at the majesty that he adored. For a few brief moments the light illumined the divine visions that had been denied to him so long —light clear and sweet and strong as though it streamed from the throne of Heaven. Then suddenly it passed away: once more a great darkness covered the face of Christ.

The arms of the boy drew close again the body of the dog. "We shall see His face—*there*," he murmured; "and He will not part us, I think."

On the morrow, by the chancel of the cathedral, the people of Antwerp found them both. They were both dead: the cold of the night had frozen into stillness alike the young life and the old. When the Christmas morning broke and the priests came to the temple, they saw them lying thus on the stones together. Above, the veils were drawn back from the great visions of Rubens, and the fresh rays of the sunrise touched the thorn-crowned head of the Christ.

As the day grew on there came an old, hard-featured man who wept as women weep. "I was cruel to the lad," he muttered, "and now I would have made

amends—yea, to the half of my substance—and he should have been to me as a son."

There came also, as the day grew apace, a painter who had fame in the world, and who was liberal of hand and of spirit. "I seek one who should have had the prize yesterday had worth won," he said to the people—"a boy of rare promise and genius. An old wood-cutter on a fallen tree at eventide—that was all his theme. But there was greatness for the future in it. I would fain find him, and take him with me and teach him Art."

And a little child with curling fair hair, sobbing bitterly as she clung to her father's arm, cried aloud, "Oh, Nello, come! We have all ready for thee. The Christ-child's hands are full of gifts, and the old piper will play for us; and the mother says thou shalt stay by the hearth and burn nuts with us all the Noël week long—yes, even to the Feast of the Kings! And Patrasche will be so happy! Oh, Nello, wake and come!"

But the young pale face, turned upward to the light of the great Rubens with a smile upon its mouth, answered them all, "It is too late."

For the sweet, sonorous bells went ringing through the frost, and the sunlight shone upon the plains of snow, and the populace trooped gay and glad through the streets, but Nello and Patrasche no more asked charity at their hands. All they needed now Antwerp gave unbidden.

Death had been more pitiful to them than longer life would have been. It had taken the one in the loyalty

of love, and the other in the innocence of faith, from a world which for love has no recompense and for faith no fulfilment.

All their lives they had been together, and in their deaths they were not divided: for when they were found the arms of the boy were folded too closely around the dog to be severed without violence, and the people of their little village, contrite and ashamed, implored a special grace for them, and, making them one grave, laid them to rest there side by side—forever!

THE NÜRNBERG STOVE

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AUGUST lived in a little town called Hall. Hall is a favorite name for several towns in Austria and in Germany; but this one especial little Hall, in the Upper Innthal, is one of the most charming Old-World places that I know, and August for his part did not know any other. It has the green meadows and the great mountains all about it, and the gray-green glacier-fed water rushes by it. It has paved streets and enchanting little shops that have all latticed panes and iron gratings to them; it has a very grand old Gothic church, that has the noblest blendings of light and shadow, and marble tombs of dead knights, and a look of infinite strength and repose as a church should have. Then there is the Muntze Tower, black and white, rising out of greenery and looking down on a long wooden bridge and the broad rapid river; and there is an old schloss which has been made into a guard-house, with battlements and frescos and heraldic devices in gold and colors, and a man-at-arms carved in stone standing life-size in his niche and bearing his date 1530. A little farther on, but close at hand, is a cloister with beautiful marble columns and tombs, and a colossal wood-carved Calvary, and beside that a small and very rich chapel: indeed, so

full is the little town of the undisturbed past, that to walk in it is like opening a missal of the Middle Ages, all emblazoned and illuminated with saints and warriors, and it is so clean, and so still, and so noble, by reason of its monuments and its historic color, that I marvel much no one has ever cared to sing its praises. The old pious heroic life of an age at once more restful and more brave than ours still leaves its spirit there, and then there is the girdle of the mountains all around, and that alone means strength, peace, majesty.

In this little town a few years ago August Strehla lived with his people in the stone-paved irregular square where the grand church stands.

He was a small boy of nine years at that time,—a chubby-faced little man with rosy cheeks, big hazel eyes, and clusters of curls the brown of ripe nuts. His mother was dead, his father was poor, and there were many mouths at home to feed. In this country the winters are long and very cold, the whole land lies wrapped in snow for many months, and this night that he was trotting home, with a jug of beer in his numb red hands, was terribly cold and dreary. The good burghers of Hall had shut their double shutters, and the few lamps there were flickered dully behind their quaint, old-fashioned iron casings. The mountains indeed were beautiful, all snow-white under the stars that are so big in frost. Hardly any one was astir; a few good souls wending home from vespers, a tired post-boy who blew a shrill blast from his tasselled horn as he pulled up his sledge before a hostelry, and little August hugging his jug of beer to his ragged sheepskin coat, were all who were abroad, for the snow

fell heavily and the good folks of Hall go early to their beds. He could not run, or he would have spilled the beer; he was half frozen and a little frightened, but he kept up his courage by saying over and over again to himself, "I shall soon be at home with dear Hirschvogel."

He went on through the streets, past the stone man-at-arms of the guard-house, and so into the place where the great church was, and where near it stood his father Karl Strehla's house, with a sculptured Bethlehem over the door-way, and the Pilgrimage of the Three Kings painted on its wall. He had been sent on a long errand outside the gates in the afternoon, over the frozen fields and the broad white snow, and had been belated, and had thought he had heard the wolves behind him at every step, and had reached the town in a great state of terror, thankful with all his little panting heart to see the oil-lamp burning under the first house-shrine. But he had not forgotten to call for the beer, and he carried it carefully now, though his hands were so numb that he was afraid they would let the jug down every moment.

The snow outlined with white every gable and cornice of the beautiful old wooden houses; the moonlight shone on the gilded signs, the lambs, the grapes, the eagles, and all the quaint devices that hung before the doors; covered lamps burned before the Nativities and Crucifixions painted on the walls or let into the wood-work; here and there, where a shutter had not been closed, a ruddy fire-light lit up a homely interior, with the noisy band of children clustering round the house-mother and a big brown loaf, or some gossips

spinning and listening to the cobbler's or the barber's story of a neighbor, while the oil-wicks glimmered, and the hearth-logs blazed, and the chestnuts sputtered in their iron roasting-pot. Little August saw all these things, as he saw everything with his two big bright eyes that had such curious lights and shadows in them; but he went heedfully on his way for the sake of the beer which a single slip of the foot would make him spill. At his knock and call the solid oak door, four centuries old if one, flew open, and the boy darted in with his beer, and shouted, with all the force of mirthful lungs, "Oh, dear Hirschvogel, but for the thought of you I should have died!"

It was a large barren room into which he rushed with so much pleasure, and the bricks were bare and uneven. It had a walnut-wood press, handsome and very old, a broad deal table, and several wooden stools for all its furniture; but at the top of the chamber, sending out warmth and color together as the lamp shed its rays upon it, was a tower of porcelain, burnished with all the hues of a king's peacock and a queen's jewels, and surmounted with armed figures, and shields, and flowers of heraldry, and a great golden crown upon the highest summit of all.

It was a stove of 1532, and on it were the letters H. R. H., for it was in every portion the handwork of the great potter of Nürnberg, Augustin Hirschvogel, who put his mark thus, as all the world knows.

The stove no doubt had stood in palaces and been made for princes, had warmed the crimson stockings of cardinals and the gold-broidered shoes of archduchesses, had glowed in presence-chambers and lent its carbon

to help kindle sharp brains in anxious councils of state; no one knew what it had seen or done or been fashioned for; but it was a right royal thing. Yet perhaps it had never been more useful than it was now in this poor desolate room, sending down heat and comfort into the troop of children tumbled together on a wolf-skin at its feet, who received frozen August among them with loud shouts of joy.

"Oh, dear Hirschvogel, I am so cold, so cold!" said August, kissing its gilded lion's claws. "Is father not in, Dorothea?"

"No, dear. He is late."

Dorothea was a girl of seventeen, dark-haired and serious, and with a sweet sad face, for she had had many cares laid on her shoulders, even whilst still a mere baby. She was the eldest of the Strehla family; and there were ten of them in all. Next to her there came Jan and Karl and Otho, big lads, gaining a little for their own living; and then came August, who went up in the summer to the high alps with the farmers' cattle, but in winter could do nothing to fill his own little platter and pot; and then all the little ones, who could only open their mouths to be fed like young birds,—Albrecht and Hilda, and Waldo and Christof, and last of all little three-year-old Ermengilda, with eyes like forget-me-nots, whose birth had cost them the life of their mother.

They were of that mixed race, half Austrian, half Italian, so common in the Tyrol; some of the children were white and golden as lilies, others were brown and brilliant as fresh-fallen chestnuts. The father was a good man, but weak and weary with so many to find

for and so little to do it with. He worked at the salt-furnaces, and by that gained a few florins; people said he would have worked better and kept his family more easily if he had not loved his pipe and a draught of ale too well; but this had only been said of him after his wife's death, when trouble and perplexity had begun to dull a brain never too vigorous, and to enfeeble further a character already too yielding. As it was, the wolf often bayed at the door of the Strehla household, without a wolf from the mountains coming down. Dorothea was one of those maidens who almost work miracles, so far can their industry and care and intelligence make a home sweet and wholesome and a single loaf seem to swell into twenty. The children were always clean and happy, and the table was seldom without its big pot of soup once a day. Still, very poor they were, and Dorothea's heart ached with shame, for she knew that their father's debts were many for flour and meat and clothing. Of fuel to feed the big stove they had always enough without cost, for their mother's father was alive, and sold wood and fir cones and coke, and never grudged them to his grandchildren, though he grumbled at Strehla's improvidence and hapless, dreamy ways.

"Father says we are never to wait for him: we will have supper, now you have come home, dear," said Dorothea, who, however she might fret her soul in secret as she knitted their hose and mended their shirts, never let her anxieties cast a gloom on the children; only to August she did speak a little sometimes, because he was so thoughtful and so tender of her always, and knew as well as she did that there were

troubles about money,—though these troubles were vague to them both, and the debtors were patient and kindly, being neighbors all in the old twisting streets between the guard-house and the river.

Supper was a huge bowl of soup, with big slices of brown bread swimming in it and some onions bobbing up and down: the bowl was soon emptied by ten wooden spoons, and then the three eldest boys slipped off to bed, being tired with their rough bodily labor in the snow all day, and Dorothea drew her spinning-wheel by the stove and set it whirring, and the little ones got August down upon the old worn wolf-skin and clamored to him for a picture or a story. For August was the artist of the family.

He had a piece of planed deal that his father had given him, and some sticks of charcoal, and he would draw a hundred things he had seen in the day, sweeping each out with his elbow when the children had seen enough of it and sketching another in its stead,—faces and dogs' heads, and men in sledges, and old women in their furs, and pine-trees, and cocks and hens, and all sorts of animals, and now and then—very reverently—a Madonna and Child. It was all very rough, for there was no one to teach him anything. But it was all life-like, and kept the whole troop of children shrieking with laughter, or watching breathless, with wide open, wondering, awed eyes.

They were all so happy: what did they care for the snow outside? Their little bodies were warm, and their hearts merry; even Dorothea, troubled about the bread for the morrow, laughed as she spun; and August, with all his soul in his work, and little rosy Er-

mengilda's cheek on his shoulder, glowing after his frozen afternoon, cried out loud, smiling, as he looked up at the stove that was shedding its heat down on them all,—

"Oh, dear Hirschvogel! you are almost as great and good as the sun! No; you are greater and better, I think, because he goes away nobody knows where all these long, dark, cold hours, and does not care how people die for want of him; but you—you are always ready: just a little bit of wood to feed you, and you will make a summer for us all the winter through!"

The grand old stove seemed to smile through all its iridescent surface at the praises of the child. No doubt the stove, though it had known three centuries and more, had known but very little gratitude.

It was one of those magnificent stoves in enamelled faïence which so excited the jealousy of the other potters of Nürnberg that in a body they demanded of the magistracy that Augustin Hirschvogel should be forbidden to make any more of them,—the magistracy, happily, proving of a broader mind, and having no sympathy with the wish of the artisans to cripple their greater fellow.

It was of great height and breadth, with all the majolica lustre which Hirschvogel learned to give to his enamels when he was making love to the young Venetian girl whom he afterwards married. There was the statue of a king at each corner, modelled with as much force and splendor as his friend Albrecht Dürer could have given unto them on copperplate or canvas. The body of the stove itself was divided into panels, which had the Ages of Man painted on them

in polychrome; the borders of the panels had roses and holly and laurel and other foliage, and German mottoes in black letter of odd Old-World moralizing, such as the old Teutons, and the Dutch after them, love to have on their chimney-places and their drinking-cups, their dishes and flagons. The whole was burnished with gilding in many parts, and was radiant everywhere with that brilliant coloring of which the Hirschvogel family, painters on glass and great in chemistry as they were, were all masters.

The stove was a very grand thing, as I say: possibly Hirschvogel had made it for some mighty lord of the Tyrol at that time when he was an imperial guest at Innspruck and fashioned so many things for the Schloss Amras and beautiful Philippine Welser, the burgher's daughter, who gained an archduke's heart by her beauty and the right to wear his honors by her wit. Nothing was known of the stove at this latter day in Hall. The grandfather Strehla, who had been a master-mason, had dug it up out of some ruins where he was building, and, finding it without a flaw, had taken it home, and only thought it worth finding because it was such a good one to burn. That was now sixty years past, and ever since then the stove had stood in the big desolate empty room, warming three generations of the Strehla family, and having seen nothing prettier perhaps in all its many years than the children tumbled now in a cluster like gathered flowers at its feet. For the Strehla children, born to nothing else, were all born with beauty: white or brown, they were equally lovely to look upon, and when they went into the church to mass, with their

curling locks and their clasped hands, they stood under the grim statues like cherubs flown down off some fresco.

"Tell us a story, August," they cried, in chorus, when they had seen charcoal pictures till they were tired; and August did as he did every night pretty nearly,—looked up at the stove and told them what he imagined of the many adventures and joys and sorrows of the human being who figured on the panels from his cradle to his grave.

To the children the stove was a household god. In summer they laid a mat of fresh moss all round it, and dressed it up with green boughs and the numberless beautiful wild flowers of the Tyrol country. In winter all their joys centred in it, and scampering home from school over the ice and snow they were happy, knowing that they would soon be cracking nuts or roasting chestnuts in the broad ardent glow of its noble tower, which rose eight feet high above them with all its spires and pinnacles and crowns.

Once a travelling peddler had told them that the letters on it meant Augustin Hirschvogel, and that Hirschvogel had been a great German potter and painter, like his father before him, in the art-sanctified city of Nürnberg, and had made many such stoves, that were all miracles of beauty and of workmanship, putting all his heart and his soul and his faith into his labors, as the men of those earlier ages did, and thinking but little of gold or praise.

An old trader, too, who sold curiosities not far from the church, had told August a little more about the brave family of Hirschvogel, whose houses can be seen

in Nürnberg to this day; of old Veit, the first of them, who painted the Gothic windows of St. Sebald with the marriage of the Margravine; of his sons and of his grandsons, potters, painters, engravers all, and chief of them great Augustin, the Luca della Robbia of the North. And August's imagination, always quick, had made a living personage out of these few records, and saw Hirschvogel as though he were in the flesh walking up and down the Maximilian-Strass in his visit to Innspruck, and maturing beautiful things in his brain as he stood on the bridge and gazed on the emerald-green flood of the Inn.

So the stove had got to be called Hirschvogel in the family, as if it were a living creature, and little August was very proud because he had been named after that famous old dead German who had had the genius to make so glorious a thing. All the children loved the stove, but with August the love of it was a passion; and in his secret heart he used to say to himself, "When I am a man, I will make just such things too, and then I will set Hirschvogel in a beautiful room in a house that I will build myself in Innspruck just outside the gates, where the chestnuts are, by the river: that is what I will do when I am a man."

For August, a salt-baker's son and a little cow-keeper when he was anything, was a dreamer of dreams, and when he was upon the high alps with his cattle, with the stillness and the sky around him, was quite certain that he would live for greater things than driving the herds up when the spring-tide came among the blue sea of gentians, or toiling down in the town with wood and with timber as his father and grand-

father did every day of their lives. He was a strong and healthy little fellow, fed on the free mountain-air, and he was very happy, and loved his family devotedly, and was as active as a squirrel and as playful as a hare; but he kept his thoughts to himself, and some of them went a very long way for a little boy who was only one among many, and to whom nobody had ever paid any attention except to teach him his letters and tell him to fear God. August in winter was only a little, hungry school-boy, trotting to be catechised by the priest, or to bring the loaves from the bake-house, or to carry his father's boots to the cobbler; and in summer he was only one of hundreds of cow-boys, who drove the poor, half-blind, blinking, stumbling cattle, ringing their throat-bells, out into the sweet intoxication of the sudden sunlight, and lived up with them in the heights among the Alpine roses, with only the clouds and the snow-summits near. But he was always thinking, thinking, thinking, for all that; and under his little sheepskin winter coat and his rough hempen summer shirt his heart had as much courage in it as Hofer's ever had,—great Hofer, who is a household word in all the Innthal, and whom August always reverently remembered when he went to the city of Innspruck and ran out by the foaming water-mill and under the wooded height of Berg Isel.

August lay now in the warmth of the stove and told the children stories, his own little brown face growing red with excitement as his imagination glowed to fever-heat. That human being on the panels, who was drawn there as a baby in a cradle, as a boy playing among flowers, as a lover sighing under a casement, as

a soldier in the midst of strife, as a father with children round him, as a weary, old, blind man on crutches, and, lastly, as a ransomed soul raised up by angels, had always had the most intense interest for August, and he had made, not one history for him, but a thousand; he seldom told them the same tale twice. He had never seen a story-book in his life; his primer and his mass-book were all the volumes he had. But nature had given him Fancy, and she is a good fairy that makes up for the want of very many things! only, alas! her wings are so very soon broken, poor thing, and then she is of no use at all.

"It is time for you all to go to bed, children," said Dorothea, looking up from her spinning. "Father is very late to-night; you must not sit up for him."

"Oh, five minutes more, dear Dorothea!" they pleaded; and little rosy and golden Ermengilda climbed up into her lap. "Hirschvogel is so warm, the beds are never so warm as he. Cannot you tell us another tale, August?"

"No," cried August, whose face had lost its light, now that his story had come to an end, and who sat serious, with his hands clasped on his knees, gazing on to the luminous arabesques of the stove.

"It is only a week to Christmas," he said, suddenly.

"Grandmother's big cakes!" chuckled little Christof, who was five years old, and thought Christmas meant a big cake and nothing else.

"What will Santa Claus find for 'Gilda if she be good?" murmured Dorothea over the child's sunny head; for, however hard poverty might pinch, it could never pinch so tightly that Dorothea would not find

some wooden toy and some rosy apples to put in her little sister's socks.

"Father Max has promised me a big goose, because I saved the calf's life in June," said August; it was the twentieth time he had told them so that month, he was so proud of it.

"And Aunt Maïla will be sure to send us wine and honey and a barrel of flour; she always does," said Albrecht. Their aunt Maïla had a chalet and a little farm over on the green slopes towards Dorp Ampas.

"I shall go up into the woods and get Hirschvogel's crown," said August; they always crowned Hirschvogel for Christmas with pine boughs and ivy and mountain-berries. The heat soon withered the crown; but it was part of the religion of the day to them, as much so as it was to cross themselves in church and raise their voices in the "O Salutaris Hostia"

And they fell chatting of all they would do on the Christ-night, and one little voice piped loud against another's, and they were as happy as though their stockings would be full of golden purses and jewelled toys, and the big goose in the soup-pot seemed to them such a meal as kings would envy.

In the midst of their chatter and laughter a blast of frozen air and a spray of driven snow struck like ice through the room, and reached them even in the warmth of the old wolf-skins and the great stove. It was the door which had opened and let in the cold; it was their father who had come home.

The younger children ran joyous to meet him. Dorothea pushed the one wooden arm-chair of the room to the stove, and August flew to set the jug of

beer on a little round table, and fill a long clay pipe; for their father was good to them all, and seldom raised his voice in anger, and they had been trained by the mother they had loved to dutifulness and obedience and a watchful affection.

To-night Karl Strehla responded very wearily to the young ones' welcome, and came to the wooden chair with a tired step and sat down heavily, not noticing either pipe or beer.

"Are you not well, dear father?" his daughter asked him.

"I am well enough," he answered, dully, and sat there with his head bent, letting the lighted pipe grow cold.

He was a fair, tall man, gray before his time, and bowed with labor.

"Take the children to bed," he said, suddenly, at last, and Dorothea obeyed. August stayed behind, curled before the stove; at nine years old, and when one earns money in the summer from the farmers, one is not altogether a child any more, at least in one's own estimation.

August did not heed his father's silence: he was used to it. Karl Strehla was a man of few words, and, being of weakly health, was usually too tired at the end of the day to do more than drink his beer and sleep. August lay on the wolf-skin, dreamy and comfortable, looking up through his drooping eyelids at the golden coronets on the crest of the great stove, and wondering for the millionth time whom it had been made for, and what grand places and scenes it had known.

Dorothea came down from putting the little ones in their beds; the cuckoo-clock in the corner struck eight; she looked to her father and the untouched pipe, then sat down to her spinning, saying nothing. She thought he had been drinking in some tavern; it had been often so with him of late.

There was a long silence; the cuckoo called the quarter twice; August dropped asleep, his curls falling over his face; Dorothea's wheel hummed like a cat.

Suddenly Karl Strehla struck his hand on the table, sending the pipe on the ground.

"I have sold Hirschvogel," he said; and his voice was husky and ashamed in his throat. The spinning-wheel stopped. August sprang erect out of his sleep.

"Sold Hirschvogel!" If their father had dashed the holy crucifix on the floor at their feet and spat on it, they could not have shuddered under the horror of a greater blasphemy.

"I have sold Hirschvogel!" said Karl Strehla, in the same husky, dogged voice. "I have sold it to a travelling trader in such things for two hundred florins. What would you?—I owe double that. He saw it this morning when you were all out. He will pack it and take it to Munich to-morrow."

Dorothea gave a low shrill cry:

"Oh, father!—the children—in mid-winter!"

She turned white as the snow without; her words died away in her throat.

August stood, half blind with sleep, staring with dazed eyes as his cattle stared at the sun when they came out from their winter's prison.

"It is not true! It is not true!" he muttered. "You are jesting, father?"

Strehla broke into a dreary laugh.

"It is true. Would you like to know what is true too?—that the bread you eat, and the meat you put in this pot, and the roof you have over your heads, are none of them paid for, have been none of them paid for for months and months: if it had not been for your grandfather I should have been in prison all summer and autumn, and he is out of patience and will do no more now. There is no work to be had; the masters go to younger men: they say I work ill; it may be so. Who can keep his head above water with ten hungry children dragging him down? When your mother lived, it was different. Boy, you stare at me as if I were a mad dog! You have made a god of yon china thing. Well—it goes: goes to-morrow. Two hundred florins, that is something. It will keep me out of prison for a little, and with the spring things may turn——"

August stood like a creature paralyzed. His eyes were wide open, fastened on his father's with terror and incredulous horror; his face had grown as white as his sister's; his chest heaved with tearless sobs.

"It is not true! It is not true!" he echoed, stupidly. It seemed to him that the very skies must fall, and the earth perish, if they could take away Hirschvogel. They might as soon talk of tearing down God's sun out of the heavens.

"You will find it true," said his father, doggedly, and angered because he was in his own soul bitterly ashamed to have bartered away the heirloom and treas-

ure of his race and the comfort and health-giver of his young children. "You will find it true. The dealer has paid me half the money to-night, and will pay me the other half to-morrow when he packs it up and takes it away to Munich. No doubt it is worth a great deal more,—at least I suppose so, as he gives that,—but beggars cannot be choosers. The little black stove in the kitchen will warm you all just as well. Who would keep a gilded, painted thing in a poor house like this, when one can make two hundred florins by it? Dorothea, you never sobbed more when your mother died. What is it, when all is said?—a bit of hardware much too grand-looking for such a room as this. If all the Strehlas had not been born fools it would have been sold a century ago, when it was dug up out of the ground. 'It is a stove for a museum,' the trader said when he saw it. To a museum let it go."

August gave a shrill shriek like a hare's when it is caught for its death, and threw himself on his knees at his father's feet.

"Oh, father, father!" he cried, convulsively, his hands closing on Strehla's knees, and his uplifted face blanched and distorted with terror. "Oh, father, dear father, you cannot mean what you say? Send *it* away —our life, our sun, our joy, our comfort? We shall all die in the dark and the cold. Sell *me* rather. Sell me to any trade or any pain you like; I will not mind. But Hirschvogel!—it is like selling the very cross off the altar! You must be in jest. You could not do such a thing—you could not!—you who have always been gentle and good, and who have sat in the warmth

here year after year with our mother. It is not a piece of hardware, as you say; it is a living thing, for a great man's thoughts and fancies have put life into it, and it loves us though we are only poor little children, and we love it with all our hearts and souls, and up in heaven I am sure the dead Hirschvogel knows! Oh, listen; I will go and try and get work to-morrow! I will ask them to let me cut ice or make the paths through the snow. There must be something I could do, and I will beg the people we owe money to to wait; they are all neighbors, they will be patient. But sell Hirschvogel!—oh, never! never! never! Give the florins back to the vile man. Tell him it would be like selling the shroud out of mother's coffin, or the golden curls off Ermengilda's head! Oh, father, dear father! do hear me, for pity's sake!"

Strehla was moved by the boy's anguish. He loved his children, though he was often weary of them, and their pain was pain to him. But besides emotion, and stronger than emotion, was the anger that August roused in him: he hated and despised himself for the barter of the heirloom of his race, and every word of the child stung him with a stinging sense of shame.

And he spoke in his wrath rather than in his sorrow.

"You are a little fool," he said, harshly, as they had never heard him speak. "You rave like a play-actor. Get up and go to bed. The stove is sold. There is no more to be said. Children like you have nothing to do with such matters. The stove is sold, and goes to Munich to-morrow. What is it to you? Be thankful I can get bread for you. Get on your legs, I say, and go to bed."

Strehla took up the jug of ale as he paused, and drained it slowly as a man who had no cares.

August sprang to his feet and threw his hair back off his face; the blood rushed into his cheeks, making them scarlet; his great soft eyes flamed alight with furious passion.

"You *dare* not!" he cried, aloud, "you dare not sell it, I say! It is not yours alone; it is ours——"

Strehla flung the emptied jug on the bricks with a force that shivered it to atoms, and, rising to his feet, struck his son a blow that felled him to the floor. It was the first time in all his life that he had ever raised his hand against any one of his children.

Then he took the oil-lamp that stood at his elbow and stumbled off to his own chamber with a cloud before his eyes.

"What has happened?" said August, a little while later, as he opened his eyes and saw Dorothea weeping above him on the wolf-skin before the stove. He had been struck backward, and his head had fallen on the hard bricks where the wolf-skin did not reach. He sat up a moment, with his face bent upon his hands.

"I remember now," he said, very low, under his breath.

Dorothea showered kisses on him, while her tears fell like rain.

"But, oh, dear, how could you speak so to father?" she murmured. "It was very wrong."

"No, I was right," said August, and his little mouth, that hitherto had only curled in laughter, curved downward with a fixed and bitter seriousness. "How dare he? How dare he?" he muttered, with his head sunk

"IT IS A SIN, IT IS A THEFT, IT IS AN INFAMY," HE SAID

in his hands. "It is not his alone. It belongs to us all. It is as much yours and mine as it is his."

Dorothea could only sob in answer. She was too frightened to speak. The authority of their parents in the house had never in her remembrance been questioned.

"Are you hurt by the fall, dear August?" she murmured, at length, for he looked to her so pale and strange.

"Yes—no. I do not know. What does it matter?"

He sat up upon the wolf-skin with passionate pain upon his face; all his soul was in rebellion, and he was only a child and was powerless.

"It is a sin; it is a theft; it is an infamy," he said, slowly, his eyes fastened on the gilded feet of Hirschvogel.

"Oh, August, do not say such things of father!" sobbed his sister. "Whatever he does, *we* ought to think it right."

August laughed aloud.

"Is it right that he should spend his money in drink?—that he should let orders lie unexecuted?—that he should do his work so ill that no one cares to employ him?—that he should live on grandfather's charity, and then dare sell a thing that is ours every whit as much as it is his? To sell Hirschvogel! Oh, dear God! I would sooner sell my soul!"

"August!" cried Dorothea, with piteous entreaty. He terrified her, she could not recognize her little, gay, gentle brother in those fierce and blasphemous words.

August laughed aloud again; then all at once his laughter broke down into bitterest weeping. He threw

himself forward on the stove, covering it with kisses, and sobbing as though his heart would burst from his bosom.

What could he do? Nothing, nothing, nothing!

"August, dear August," whispered Dorothea, piteously, and trembling all over,—for she was a very gentle girl, and fierce feeling terrified her,—"August, do not lie there. Come to bed: it is quite late. In the morning you will be calmer. It is horrible indeed, and we shall die of cold, at least the little ones; but if it be father's will——"

"Let me alone," said August, through his teeth, striving to still the storm of sobs that shook him from head to foot. "Let me alone. In the morning!—how can you speak of the morning?"

"Come to bed, dear," sighed his sister. "Oh, August, do not lie and look like that! you frighten me. Do come to bed."

"I shall stay here."

"Here! all night!"

"They might take it in the night. Besides, to leave it *now!*"

"But it is cold! the fire is out."

"It will never be warm any more, nor shall we."

All his childhood had gone out of him, all his gleeful, careless, sunny temper had gone with it; he spoke sullenly and wearily, choking down the great sobs in his chest. To him it was as if the end of the world had come.

His sister lingered by him while striving to persuade him to go to his place in the little crowded bedchamber with Albrecht and Waldo and Christof. But it was

in vain. "I shall stay here," was all he answered her. And he stayed,—all the night long.

The lamps went out; the rats came and ran across the floor; as the hours crept on through midnight and past, the cold intensified and the air of the room grew like ice. August did not move; he lay with his face downward on the golden and rainbow-hued pedestal of the household treasure, which henceforth was to be cold for evermore, an exiled thing in a foreign city in a far-off land.

Whilst yet it was dark his three elder brothers came down the stairs and let themselves out, each bearing his lantern and going to his work in stone-yard and timber-yard and at the salt-works. They did not notice him; they did not know what had happened.

A little later his sister came down with a light in her hand to make ready the house ere morning should break.

She stole up to him and laid her hand on his shoulder timidly.

"Dear August, you must be frozen. August, do look up! do speak!"

August raised his eyes with a wild, feverish, sullen look in them that she had never seen there. His face was ashen white: his lips were like fire. He had not slept all night; but his passionate sobs had given way to delirious waking dreams and numb senseless trances, which had alternated one on another all through the freezing, lonely, horrible hours.

"It will never be warm again," he muttered, "never again!"

Dorothea clasped him with trembling hands.

"August! do you not know me?" she cried, in an agony. "I am Dorothea. Wake up, dear—wake up! It is morning, only so dark!"

August shuddered all over.

"The morning!" he echoed.

He slowly rose up on to his feet.

"I will go to grandfather," he said, very low. "He is always good: perhaps he could save it."

Loud blows with the heavy iron knocker of the house-door drowned his words. A strange voice called aloud through the keyhole,—

"Let me in! Quick!—there is no time to lose! More snow like this, and the roads will all be blocked. Let me in! Do you hear? I am come to take the great stove."

August sprang erect, his fists doubled, his eyes blazing.

"You shall never touch it!" he screamed; "you shall never touch it!"

"Who shall prevent us?" laughed a big man, who was a Bavarian, amused at the fierce little figure fronting him.

"I!" said August. "You shall never have it! you shall kill me first!"

"Strehla," said the big man, as August's father entered the room, "you have got a little mad dog here: muzzle him."

One way and another they did muzzle him. He fought like a little demon, and hit out right and left, and one of his blows gave the Bavarian a black eye. But he was soon mastered by four grown men, and his father flung him with no light hand out from the door

of the back entrance, and the buyers of the stately and beautiful stove set to work to pack it heedfully and carry it away.

When Dorothea stole out to look for August, he was nowhere in sight. She went back to little 'Gilda, who was ailing, and sobbed over the child, whilst the others stood looking on, dimly understanding that with Hirschvogel was going all the warmth of their bodies, all the light of their hearth.

Even their father now was sorry and ashamed; but two hundred florins seemed a big sum to him, and, after all, he thought the children could warm themselves quite as well at the black iron stove in the kitchen. Besides, whether he regretted it now or not, the work of the Nürnberg potter was sold irrevocably, and he had to stand still and see the men from Munich wrap it in manifold wrappings and bear it out into the snowy air to where an ox-cart stood in waiting for it.

In another moment Hirschvogel was gone,—gone forever and aye.

August had stood still for a time, leaning, sick and faint from the violence that had been used to him, against the back wall of the house. The wall looked on a court where a well was, and the backs of other houses, and beyond them the spire of the Muntze Tower and the peaks of the mountains.

Into the court an old neighbor hobbled for water, and, seeing the boy, said to him,—

"Child, is it true your father is selling the big painted stove?"

August nodded his head, then burst into a passion of tears.

"Well, for sure he is a fool," said the neighbor. "Heaven forgive me for calling him so before his own child! but the stove was worth a mint of money. I do remember in my young days, in old Anton's time (that was your great-grandfather, my lad), a stranger from Vienna saw it, and said that it was worth its weight in gold."

August's sobs went on their broken, impetuous course.

"I loved it! I loved it!" he moaned. "I do not care what its value was. I loved it! *I loved it!*"

"You little simpleton!" said the old man, kindly. "But you are wiser than your father, when all's said. If sell it he must, he should have taken it to good Herr Steiner over at Sprüz, who would have given him honest value. But no doubt they took him over his beer,—ay, ay! but if I were you I would do better than cry. I would go after it."

August raised his head, the tears raining down his cheeks.

"Go after it when you are bigger," said the neighbor, with a good-natured wish to cheer him up a little. "The world is a small thing after all: I was a travelling clockmaker once upon a time, and I know that your stove will be safe enough whoever gets it; anything that can be sold for a round sum is always wrapped up in cotton wool by everybody. Ay, ay, don't cry so much; you will see your stove again some day."

Then the old man hobbled away to draw his brazen pail full of water at the well.

August remained leaning against the wall; his head

was buzzing and his heart fluttering with the new idea which had presented itself to his mind. "Go after it," had said the old man. He thought, "Why not go with it?" He loved it better than any one, even better than Dorothea; and he shrank from the thought of meeting his father again, his father who had sold Hirschvogel.

He was by this time in that state of exaltation in which the impossible looks quite natural and commonplace. His tears were still wet on his pale cheeks, but they had ceased to fall. He ran out of the court-yard by a little gate, and across to the huge Gothic porch of the church. From there he could watch unseen his father's house-door, at which were always hanging some blue-and-gray pitchers, such as are common and so picturesque in Austria, for a part of the house was let to a man who dealt in pottery.

He hid himself in the grand portico, which he had so often passed through to go to mass or complin within, and presently his heart gave a great leap, for he saw the straw-enwrapped stove brought out and laid with infinite care on the bullock-dray. Two of the Bavarian men mounted beside it, and the sleigh-wagon slowly crept over the snow of the place,—snow crisp and hard as stone. The noble old minster looked its grandest and most solemn, with its dark-gray stone and its vast archways, and its porch that was itself as big as many a church, and its strange gargoyles and lamp-irons black against the snow on its roof and on the pavement; but for once August had no eyes for it: he only watched for his old friend. Then he, a little unnoticeable figure enough, like a score

of other boys in Hall, crept, unseen by any of his brothers or sisters, out of the porch and over the shelving uneven square, and followed in the wake of the dray.

Its course lay towards the station of the railway, which is close to the salt-works, whose smoke at times sullies this part of clean little Hall, though it does not do very much damage. From Hall the iron road runs northward through glorious country to Salzburg, Vienna, Prague, Buda, and southward over the Brenner into Italy. Was Hirschvogel going north or south? This at least he would soon know.

August had often hung about the little station, watching the trains come and go and dive into the heart of the hills and vanish. No one said anything to him for idling about; people are kind-hearted and easy of temper in this pleasant land, and children and dogs are both happy there. He heard the Bavarians arguing and vociferating a great deal, and learned that they meant to go too and wanted to go with the great stove itself. But this they could not do, for neither could the stove go by a passenger-train nor they themselves go in a goods-train. So at length they insured their precious burden for a large sum, and consented to send it by a luggage-train which was to pass through Hall in half an hour. The swift trains seldom deign to notice the existence of Hall at all.

August heard, and a desperate resolve made itself up in his little mind. Where Hirschvogel went would he go. He gave one terrible thought to Dorothea—poor, gentle Dorothea!—sitting in the cold at home, then set to work to execute his project. How he man-

aged it he never knew very clearly himself, but certain it is that when the goods-train from the north, that had come all the way from Linz on the Danube, moved out of Hall, August was hidden behind the stove in the great covered truck, and wedged, unseen and undreamt of by any human creature, amidst the cases of wood-carving, of clocks and clock-work, of Vienna toys, of Turkish carpets, of Russian skins, of Hungarian wines, which shared the same abode as did his swathed and bound Hirschvogel. No doubt he was very naughty, but it never occurred to him that he was so: his whole mind and soul were absorbed in the one entrancing idea, to follow his beloved friend and fire-king.

It was very dark in the closed truck, which had only a little window above the door; and it was crowded, and had a strong smell in it from the Russian hides and the hams that were in it. But August was not frightened; he was close to Hirschvogel, and presently he meant to be closer still; for he meant to do nothing less than get inside Hirschvogel itself. Being a shrewd little boy, and having had by great luck two silver groschen in his breeches-pocket, which he had earned the day before by chopping wood, he had bought some bread and sausage at the station of a woman there who knew him, and who thought he was going out to his uncle Joachim's chalet above Jenbach. This he had with him, and this he ate in the darkness and the lumbering, pounding, thundering noise which made him giddy, as never had he been in a train of any kind before. Still he ate, having had no breakfast, and being a child, and half a German,

and not knowing at all how or when he ever would eat again.

When he had eaten, not as much as he wanted, but as much as he thought was prudent (for who could say when he would be able to buy anything more?), he set to work like a little mouse to make a hole in the withes of straw and hay which enveloped the stove. If it had been put in a packing-case he would have been defeated at the onset. As it was, he gnawed, and nibbled, and pulled, and pushed, just as a mouse would have done, making his hole where he guessed that the opening of the stove was,—the opening through which he had so often thrust the big oak logs to feed it. No one disturbed him; the heavy train went lumbering on and on, and he saw nothing at all of the beautiful mountains, and shining waters, and great forests through which he was being carried. He was hard at work getting through the straw and hay and twisted ropes; and get through them at last he did, and found the door of the stove, which he knew so well, and which was quite large enough for a child of his age to slip through, and it was this which he had counted upon doing. Slip through he did, as he had often done at home for fun, and curled himself up there to see if he could anyhow remain during many hours. He found that he could; air came in through the brass fret-work of the stove; and with admirable caution in such a little fellow he leaned out, drew the hay and straw together, and rearranged the ropes, so that no one could ever have dreamed a little mouse had been at them. Then he curled himself up again, this time more like a dormouse than anything else; and, being safe inside

his dear Hirschvogel and intensely cold, he went fast asleep as if he were in his own bed at home with Albrecht and Christof on either side of him. The train lumbered on, stopping often and long, as the habit of goods-trains is, sweeping the snow away with its cow-switcher, and rumbling through the deep heart of the mountains, with its lamps aglow like the eyes of a dog in a night of frost.

The train rolled on in its heavy, slow fashion, and the child slept soundly for a long while. When he did awake, it was quite dark outside in the land; he could not see, and of course he was in absolute darkness; and for a while he was sorely frightened, and trembled terribly, and sobbed in a quiet heart-broken fashion, thinking of them all at home. Poor Dorothea! how anxious she would be! How she would run over the town and walk up to grandfather's at Dorf Ampas, and perhaps even send over to Jenbach, thinking he had taken refuge with Uncle Joachim! His conscience smote him for the sorrow he must be even then causing to his gentle sister; but it never occurred to him to try and go back. If he once were to lose sight of Hirschvogel how could he ever hope to find it again? how could he ever know whither it had gone,—north, south, east, or west? The old neighbor had said that the world was small; but August knew at least that it must have a great many places in it: that he had seen himself on the maps on his schoolhouse walls. Almost any other little boy would, I think, have been frightened out of his wits at the position in which he found himself; but August was brave, and he had a firm belief that God and Hirsch-

vogel would take care of him. The master-potter of Nürnberg was always present to his mind, a kindly, benign, and gracious spirit, dwelling manifestly in that porcelain tower whereof he had been the maker.

A droll fancy, you say? But every child with a soul in him has quite as quaint fancies as this one was of August's.

So he got over his terror and his sobbing both, though he was so utterly in the dark. He did not feel cramped at all, because the stove was so large, and air he had in plenty, as it came through the fret-work running round the top. He was hungry again, and again nibbled with prudence at his loaf and his sausage. He could not at all tell the hour. Every time the train stopped and he heard the banging, stamping, shouting, and jangling of chains that went on, his heart seemed to jump up into his mouth. If they should find him out! Sometimes porters came and took away this case and the other, a sack here, a bale there, now a big bag, now a dead chamois. Every time the men trampled near him, and swore at each other, and banged this and that to and fro, he was so frightened that his very breath seemed to stop. When they came to lift the stove out, would they find him? and if they did find him, would they kill him? That was what he kept thinking of all the way, all through the dark hours, which seemed without end. The goods-trains are usually very slow, and are many days doing what a quick train does in a few hours. This one was quicker than most, because it was bearing goods to the King of Bavaria; still, it took all the short winter's day and the long winter's night and half another day to go

over ground that the mail-trains cover in a forenoon. It passed great armored Kuffstein standing across the beautiful and solemn gorge, denying the right of way to all the foes of Austria. It passed twelve hours later, after lying by in out-of-the-way stations, pretty Rosenheim, that marks the border of Bavaria. And here the Nürnberg stove, with August inside it, was lifted out heedfully and set under a covered way. When it was lifted out, the boy had hard work to keep in his screams; he was tossed to and fro as the men lifted the huge thing, and the earthenware walls of his beloved fire-king were not cushions of down. However, though they swore and grumbled at the weight of it, they never suspected that a living child was inside it, and they carried it out on to the platform and set it down under the roof of the goods-shed. There it passed the rest of the night and all the next morning, and August was all the while within it.

The winds of early winter sweep bitterly over Rosenheim, and all the vast Bavarian plain was one white sheet of snow. If there had not been whole armies of men at work always clearing the iron rails of the snow, no trains could ever have run at all. Happily for August, the thick wrappings in which the stove was enveloped and the stoutness of its own make screened him from the cold, of which, else, he must have died,—frozen. He had still some of his loaf, and a little—a very little—of his sausage. What he did begin to suffer from was thirst; and this frightened him almost more than anything else, for Dorothea had read aloud to them one night a story of the tortures some wrecked men had endured because they could not find any water

but the salt sea. It was many hours since he had last taken a drink from the wooden spout of their old pump, which brought them the sparkling, ice-cold water of the hills.

But, fortunately for him, the stove, having been marked and registered as "fragile and valuable," was not treated quite like a mere bale of goods, and the Rosenheim station-master, who knew its consignees, resolved to send it on by a passenger-train that would leave there at daybreak. And when this train went out, in it, among piles of luggage belonging to other travellers, to Vienna, Prague, Buda-Pest, Salzburg, was August, still undiscovered, still doubled up like a mole in the winter under the grass. Those words, "fragile and valuable," had made the men lift Hirschvogel gently and with care. He had begun to get used to his prison, and a little used to the incessant pounding and jumbling and rattling and shaking with which modern travel is always accompanied, though modern invention does deem itself so mightily clever. All in the dark he was, and he was terribly thirsty; but he kept feeling the earthenware sides of the Nürnberg giant and saying, softly, "Take care of me; oh, take care of me, dear Hirschvogel!"

He did not say, "Take me back;" for, now that he was fairly out in the world, he wished to see a little of it. He began to think that they must have been all over the world in all this time that the rolling and roaring and hissing and jangling had been about his ears; shut up in the dark, he began to remember all the tales that had been told in Yule round the fire at his grandfather's good house at Dorf, of gnomes and

elves and subterranean terrors, and the Erl King riding on the black horse of night, and—and—and he began to sob and to tremble again, and this time did scream outright. But the steam was screaming itself so loudly that no one, had there been any one nigh, would have heard him; and in another minute or so the train stopped with a jar and a jerk, and he in his cage could hear men crying aloud, "München! München!"

Then he knew enough of geography to know that he was in the heart of Bavaria. He had had an uncle killed in the Bayerischenwald by the Bavarian forest guards, when in the excitement of hunting a black bear he had overpassed the limits of the Tyrol frontier.

That fate of his kinsman, a gallant young chamois-hunter who had taught him to handle a trigger and load a muzzle, made the very name of Bavaria a terror to August.

"It is Bavaria! It is Bavaria!" he sobbed to the stove; but the stove said nothing to him; it had no fire in it. A stove can no more speak without fire than a man can see without light. Give it fire, and it will sing to you, tell tales to you, offer you in return all the sympathy you ask.

"It is Bavaria!" sobbed August; for it is always a name of dread augury to the Tyroleans, by reason of those bitter struggles and midnight shots and untimely deaths which come from those meetings of jäger and hunter in the Bayerischenwald. But the train stopped; Munich was reached, and August, hot and cold by turns, and shaking like a little aspen-leaf, felt himself

once more carried out on the shoulders of men, rolled along on a truck, and finally set down, where he knew not, only he knew he was thirsty,—so thirsty! If only he could have reached his hand out and scooped up a little snow!

He thought he had been moved on this truck many miles, but in truth the stove had been only taken from the railway-station to a shop in the Marienplatz. Fortunately, the stove was always set upright on its four gilded feet, an injunction to that effect having been affixed to its written label, and on its gilded feet it stood now in the small dark curiosity-shop of one Hans Rhilfer.

"I shall not unpack it till Anton comes," he heard a man's voice say; and then he heard a key grate in a lock, and by the unbroken stillness that ensued he concluded he was alone, and ventured to peep through the straw and hay. What he saw was a small square room filled with pots and pans, pictures, carvings, old blue jugs, old steel armor, shields, daggers, Chinese idols, Vienna china, Turkish rugs, and all the art lumber and fabricated rubbish of a *bric-à-brac* dealer's. It seemed a wonderful place to him; but, oh! was there one drop of water in it all? That was his single thought; for his tongue was parching, and his throat felt on fire, and his chest began to be dry and choked as with dust. There was not a drop of water, but there was a lattice window grated, and beyond the window was a wide stone ledge covered with snow. August cast one look at the locked door, darted out of his hiding-place, ran and opened the window, crammed the snow into his mouth again and again, and then

AUGUST OPENED THE WINDOW, CRAMMED THE SNOW INTO HIS MOUTH AGAIN AND AGAIN

flew back into the stove, drew the hay and straw over the place he entered by, tied the cords, and shut the brass door down on himself. He had brought some big icicles in with him, and by them his thirst was finally, if only temporarily, quenched. Then he sat still in the bottom of the stove, listening intently, wide awake, and once more recovering his natural boldness.

The thought of Dorothea kept nipping his heart and his conscience with a hard squeeze now and then; but he thought to himself, "If I can take her back Hirschvogel, then how pleased she will be, and how little 'Gilda will clap her hands!" He was not at all selfish in his love for Hirschvogel: he wanted it for them all at home quite as much as for himself. There was at the bottom of his mind a kind of ache of shame that his father—his own father—should have stripped their hearth and sold their honor thus.

A robin had been perched upon a stone griffin sculptured on a house-eave near. August had felt for the crumbs of his loaf in his pocket, and had thrown them to the little bird sitting so easily on the frozen snow.

In the darkness where he was he now heard a little song, made faint by the stove-wall and the window-glass that was between him and it, but still distinct and exquisitely sweet. It was the robin, singing after feeding on the crumbs. August, as he heard, burst into tears. He thought of Dorothea, who every morning threw out some grain or some bread on the snow before the church. "What use is it going *there*," she said, "if we forget the sweetest creatures God has

made?" Poor Dorothea! Poor, good, tender, much-burdened little soul! He thought of her till his tears ran like rain.

Yet it never once occurred to him to dream of going home. Hirschvogel was here.

Presently the key turned in the lock of the door; he heard heavy footsteps and the voice of the man who had said to his father, "You have a little mad dog; muzzle him!" The voice said, "Ay, ay, you have called me a fool many times. Now you shall see what I have gotten for two hundred dirty florins. *Potztausend!* never did *you* do such a stroke of work."

Then the other voice grumbled and swore, and the steps of the two men approached more closely, and the heart of the child went pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, as a mouse's does when it is on the top of a cheese and hears a housemaid's broom sweeping near. They began to strip the stove of its wrappings: that he could tell by the noise they made with the hay and the straw. Soon they had stripped it wholly: that, too, he knew by the oaths and exclamations of wonder and surprise and rapture which broke from the man who had not seen it before.

"A right royal thing! A wonderful and never-to-be-rivalled thing! Grander than the great stove of Hohen-Salzburg! Sublime! magnificent! matchless!"

So the epithets ran on in thick guttural voices, diffusing a smell of lager-beer so strong as they spoke that it reached August crouching in his stronghold. If they should open the door of the stove! That was his frantic fear. If they should open it, it would be all over with him. They would drag him out; most

likely they would kill him, he thought, as his mother's young brother had been killed in the Wald.

The perspiration rolled off his forehead in his agony; but he had control enough over himself to keep quiet, and after standing by the Nürnberg master's work for nigh an hour, praising, marvelling, expatiating in the lengthy German tongue, the men moved to a little distance and began talking of sums of money and divided profits, of which discourse he could make out no meaning. All he could make out was that the name of the king—the king—the king came over very often in their arguments. He fancied at times they quarrelled, for they swore lustily and their voices rose hoarse and high; but after a while they seemed to pacify each other and agree to something, and were in great glee, and so in these merry spirits came and slapped the luminous sides of stately Hirschvogel, and shouted to it,—

"Old Mumchance, you have brought us rare good luck! To think you were smoking in a silly fool of a salt-baker's kitchen all these years!"

Then inside the stove August jumped up, with flaming cheeks and clinching hands, and was almost on the point of shouting out to them that they were the thieves and should say no evil of his father, when he remembered, just in time, that to breathe a word or make a sound was to bring ruin on himself and sever him forever from Hirschvogel. So he kept quite still, and the men barred the shutters of the little lattice and went out by the door, double-locking it after them. He had made out from their talk that they were going to show Hirschvogel to some great person: therefore he kept quite still and dared not move.

Muffled sounds came to him through the shutters from the streets below,—the rolling of wheels, the clanging of church-bells, and bursts of that military music which is so seldom silent in the streets of Munich. An hour perhaps passed by; sounds of steps on the stairs kept him in perpetual apprehension. In the intensity of his anxiety, he forgot that he was hungry and many miles away from cheerful, Old World little Hall, lying by the clear gray river-water, with the ramparts of the mountains all around.

Presently the door opened again sharply. He could hear the two dealers' voices murmuring unctuous words, in which "honor," "gratitude," and many fine long noble titles played the chief parts. The voice of another person, more clear and refined than theirs, answered them curtly, and then, close by the Nürnberg stove and the boy's ear, ejaculated a single "*Wunderschön!*" August almost lost his terror for himself in his thrill of pride at his beloved Hirschvögel being thus admired in the great city. He thought the master-potter must be glad too.

"*Wunderschön!*" ejaculated the stranger a second time, and then examined the stove in all its parts, read all its mottoes, gazed long on all its devices.

"It must have been made for the Emperor Maximilian," he said at last; and the poor little boy, meanwhile, within, was "hugged up into nothing," as you children say, dreading that every moment he would open the stove. And open it truly he did, and examined the brass-work of the door; but inside it was so dark that crouching August passed unnoticed, screwed up into a ball like a hedgehog as he was.

The gentleman shut to the door at length, without having seen anything strange inside it; and then he talked long and low with the tradesmen, and, as his accent was different from that which August was used to, the child could distinguish little that he said, except the name of the king and the word "gulden" again and again. After a while he went away, one of the dealers accompanying him, one of them lingering behind to bar up the shutters. Then this one also withdrew again, double-locking the door.

The poor little hedgehog uncurled itself and dared to breathe aloud.

What time was it?

Late in the day, he thought, for to accompany the stranger they had lighted a lamp; he had heard the scratch of the match, and through the brass fret-work had seen the lines of light.

He would have to pass the night here, that was certain. He and Hirschvogel were locked in, but at least they were together. If only he could have had something to eat! He thought with a pang of how at this hour at home they ate the sweet soup, sometimes with apples in it from Aunt Maïla's farm orchard, and sang together, and listened to Dorothea's reading of little tales, and basked in the glow and delight that had beamed on them from the great Nürnberg fire-king.

"Oh, poor, poor little 'Gilda! What is she doing without the dear Hirschvogel?" he thought. Poor little 'Gilda! she had only now the black iron stove of the ugly little kitchen. Oh, how cruel of father!

August could not bear to hear the dealers blame or laugh at his father, but he did feel that it had been so,

so cruel to sell Hirschvogel. The mere memory of all those long winter evenings, when they had all closed round it, and roasted chestnuts or crab-apples in it, and listened to the howling of the wind and the deep sound of the church-bells, and tried very much to make each other believe that the wolves still came down from the mountains into the streets of Hall, and were that very minute growling at the house door,—all this memory coming on him with the sound of the city bells, and the knowledge that night drew near upon him so completely, being added to his hunger and his fear, so overcame him that he burst out crying for the fiftieth time since he had been inside the stove, and felt that he would starve to death, and wondered dreamily if Hirschvogel would care. Yes, he was sure Hirschvogel would care. Had he not decked it all summer long with alpine roses and edelweiss and heaths and made it sweet with thyme and honeysuckle and great garden-lilies? Had he ever forgotten when Santa Claus came to make it its crown of holly and ivy and wreathe it all around?

"Oh, shelter me; save me; take care of me!" he prayed to the old fire-king, and forgot, poor little man, that he had come on this wild-goose chase northward to save and take care of Hirschvogel!

After a time he dropped asleep, as children can do when they weep, and little robust hill-born boys most surely do, be they where they may. It was not very cold in this lumber-room; it was tightly shut up, and very full of things, and at the back of it were the hot pipes of an adjacent house, where a great deal of fuel was burnt. Moreover, August's clothes were warm

ones, and his blood was young. So he was not cold, though Munich is terribly cold in the nights of December; and he slept on and on,—which was a comfort to him, for he forgot his woes, and his perils, and his hunger, for a time.

Midnight was once more chiming from all the brazen tongues of the city when he awoke, and, all being still around him, ventured to put his head out of the brass door of the stove to see why such a strange bright light was round him.

It was a very strange and brilliant light indeed; and yet, what is perhaps still stranger, it did not frighten or amaze him, nor did what he saw alarm him either, and yet I think it would have done you or me. For what he saw was nothing less than all the *bric-à-brac* in motion.

A big jug, an Apostel-Krug, of Kruessen, was solemnly dancing a minuet with a plump Faenza jar; a tall Dutch clock was going through a gavotte with a spindle-legged ancient chair; a very droll porcelain figure of Littenhausen was bowing to a very stiff soldier in *terre cuite* of Ulm; an old violin of Cremona was playing itself, and a queer little shrill plaintive music that thought itself merry came from a painted spinnet covered with faded roses; some gilt Spanish leather had got up on the wall and laughed; a Dresden mirror was tripping about, crowned with flowers, and a Japanese bonze was riding along on a griffin; a slim Venetian rapier had come to blows with a stout Ferrara sabre, all about a little pale-faced chit of a damsel in white Nymphenburg china; and a portly Franconian pitcher in *grès gris* was calling aloud, "Oh, these Ital

ians! always at feud!" But nobody listened to him at all. A great number of little Dresden cups and saucers were all skipping and waltzing; the teapots, with their broad round faces, were spinning their own lids like teetotums; the high-backed gilded chairs were having a game of cards together; and a little Saxe poodle, with a blue ribbon at its throat, was running from one to another, whilst a yellow cat of Cornelis Lachtleven's rode about on a Delft horse in blue pottery of 1489. Meanwhile the brilliant light shed on the scene came from three silver candelabra, though they had no candles set up in them; and, what is the greatest miracle of all, August looked on at these mad freaks and felt no sensation of wonder! He only, as he heard the violin and the spinnet playing, felt an irresistible desire to dance too.

No doubt his face said what he wished; for a lovely little lady, all in pink and gold and white, with powdered hair, and high-heeled shoes, and all made of the very finest and fairest Meissen china, tripped up to him, and smiled, and gave him her hand, and led him out to a minuet. And he danced it perfectly,—poor little August in his thick, clumsy shoes, and his thick, clumsy sheepskin jacket, and his rough home-spun linen, and his broad Tyrolean hat! He must have danced it perfectly, this dance of kings and queens in days when crowns were duly honored, for the lovely lady always smiled benignly and never scolded him at all, and danced so divinely herself to the stately measures the spinnet was playing that August could not take his eyes off her till, their minuet ended, she sat down on her own white-and-gold bracket.

"I am the Princess of Saxe-Royale," she said to him, with a benignant smile; "and you have got through that minuet very fairly."

Then he ventured to say to her,—

"Madame my princess, could you tell me kindly why some of the figures and furniture dance and speak, and some lie up in a corner like lumber? It does make me curious. Is it rude to ask?"

For it greatly puzzled him why, when some of the *bric-à-brac* was all full of life and motion, some was quite still and had not a single thrill in it.

"My dear child," said the powdered lady, "is it possible that you do not know the reason? Why, those silent, dull things are *imitation!*"

This she said with so much decision that she evidently considered it a condensed but complete answer.

"Imitation?" repeated August, timidly, not understanding.

"Of course! Lies, falsehoods, fabrications!" said the princess in pink shoes, very vivaciously. "They only *pretend* to be what we *are!* They never wake up: how can they? No imitation ever had any soul in it yet."

"Oh!" said August, humbly, not even sure that he understood entirely yet. He looked at Hirschvogel: surely it had a royal soul within it: would it not wake up and speak? Oh dear! how he longed to hear the voice of his fire-king! And he began to forget that he stood by a lady who sat upon a pedestal of gold-and-white china, with the year 1746 cut on it, and the Meissen mark.

"What will you be when you are a man?" said the

little lady, sharply, for her black eyes were quick though her red lips were smiling. "Will you work for the *Königliche Porcellan-Manufactur*, like my great dead Kandler?"

"I have never thought," said August, stammering; "at least—that is—I do wish—I do hope to be a painter, as was Master Augustin Hirschvogel at Nürnberg."

"Bravo!" said all the real *bric-à-brac* in one breath, and the two Italian rapiers left off fighting to cry, "*Benone!*" For there is not a bit of true *bric-à-brac* in all Europe that does not know the names of the mighty masters.

August felt quite pleased to have won so much applause, and grew as red as the lady's shoes with bashful contentment.

"I knew all the Hirschvögel, from old Veit downwards," said a fat *grès de Flandre* beer-jug: "I myself was made at Nürnberg." And he bowed to the great stove very politely, taking off his own silver hat—I mean lid—with a courtly sweep that he could scarcely have learned from burgomasters. The stove, however, was silent, and a sickening suspicion (for what is such heart-break as a suspicion of what we love?) came through the mind of August: *Was Hirschvogel only imitation?*

"No, no, no, no!" he said to himself, stoutly: though Hirschvogel never stirred, never spoke, yet would he keep all faith in it! After all their happy years together, after all the nights of warmth and joy he owed it, should he doubt his own friend and hero, whose gilt lion's feet he had kissed in his babyhood? No,

no, no, no!" he said, again, with so much emphasis that the Lady of Meissen looked sharply again at him.

"No," she said, with pretty disdain; "no, believe me, they may 'pretend' forever. They can never look like us! They imitate even our marks, but never can they look like the real thing, never can they *chassent de race.*"

"How should they?" said a bronze statuette of Vischer's. "They daub themselves green with verdigris, or sit out in the rain to get rusted; but green and rust are not *patina;* only the ages can give that!"

"And *my* imitations are all in primary colors, staring colors, hot as the colors of a hostelry's sign-board!" said the Lady of Meissen, with a shiver.

"Well, there is a *grès de Flandre* over there, who pretends to be a Hans Kraut, as I am," said the jug with the silver hat, pointing with his handle to a jug that lay prone on its side in a corner. "He has copied me as exactly as it is given to moderns to copy us. Almost he might be mistaken for me. But yet what a difference there is! How crude are his blues! how evidently done over the glaze are his black letters! He has tried to give himself my very twist; but what a lamentable exaggeration of that playful deviation in my lines which in his becomes actual deformity!"

"And look at that," said the gilt Cordovan leather, with a contemptuous glance at a broad piece of gilded leather spread out on a table. "They will sell him cheek by jowl with me, and give him my name; but look! *I* am overlaid with pure gold beaten thin as a film and laid on me in absolute honesty by worthy Diego de las Gorgias, worker in leather of lovely Cor-

Jova in the blessed reign of Ferdinand the Most Christian. *His* gilding is one part gold to eleven other parts of brass and rubbish, and it has been laid on him with a brush—*a brush!*—pah! of course he will be as black as a crock in a few years' time, whilst I am as bright as when I first was made, and, unless I am burnt as my Cordova burnt its heretics, I shall shine on forever."

"They carve pear-wood because it is so soft, and dye it brown, and call it *me!*" said an old oak cabinet, with a chuckle.

"That is not so painful; it does not vulgarize you so much as the cups they paint to-day and christen after *me!*" said a Carl Theodor cup subdued in hue, yet gorgeous as a jewel.

"Nothing can be so annoying as to see common gimcracks aping *me!*" interposed the princess in the pink shoes.

"They even steal my motto, though it is Scripture," said a *Trauerkrug* of Regensburg in black-and-white.

"And my own dots they put on plain English china creatures!" sighed the little white maid of Nymphenburg.

"And they sell hundreds and thousands of common china plates, calling them after me, and baking my saints and my legends in a muffle of to-day; it is blasphemy!" said a stout plate of Gubbio, which in its year of birth had seen the face of Maestro Giorgio.

"That is what is so terrible in these *bric-à-brac* places," said the princess of Meissen. "It brings one in contact with such low, imitative creatures; one really

is safe nowhere nowadays unless under glass at the Louvre or South Kensington."

"And they get even there," sighed the *grès de Flandre*. "A terrible thing happened to a dear friend of mine, a *terre cuite* of Blasius (you know the *terres cuites* of Blasius date from 1560). Well, he was put under glass in a museum that shall be nameless, and he found himself set next to his own imitation born and baked yesterday at Frankfort, and what think you the miserable creature said to him, with a grin? 'Old Pipe-clay,'—that is what he called my friend,—'the fellow that bought *me* got just as much commission on me as the fellow that bought *you*, and that was all that *he* thought about. You know it is only the public money that goes!' And the horrid creature grinned again till he actually cracked himself. There is a Providence above all things, even museums."

"Providence might have interfered before, and saved the public money," said the little Meissen lady with the pink shoes.

"After all, does it matter?" said a Dutch jar of Haarlem. "All the shamming in the world will not *make* them us!"

"One does not like to be vulgarized," said the Lady of Meissen, angrily.

"My maker, the Krabbetje,* did not trouble his head about that," said the Haarlem jar, proudly. "The Krabbetje made me for the kitchen, the bright, clean, snow-white Dutch kitchen, wellnigh three centuries

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* Jan Asselyn, called Krabbetje, the Little Crab, born 1610, master-potter of Delft and Haarlem.

ago, and now I am thought worthy the palace; yet I wish I were at home; yes, I wish I could see the good Dutch vrouw, and the shining canals, and the great green meadows dotted with the kine."

"Ah! if we could all go back to our makers!" sighed the Gubbio plate, thinking of Giorgio Andreoli and the glad and gracious days of the Renaissance: and somehow the words touched the frolicsome souls of the dancing jars, the spinning teapots, the chairs that were playing cards; and the violin stopped its merry music with a sob, and the spinnet sighed,—thinking of dead hands.

Even the little Saxe poodle howled for a master forever lost; and only the swords went on quarrelling, and made such a clattering noise that the Japanese bonze rode at them on his monster and knocked them both right over, and they lay straight and still, looking foolish, and the little Nymphenburg maid, though she was crying, smiled and almost laughed.

Then from where the great stove stood there came a solemn voice.

All eyes turned upon Hirschvogel, and the heart of its little human comrade gave a great jump of joy.

"My friends," said that clear voice from the turret of Nürnberg faïence, "I have listened to all you have said. There is too much talking among the Mortalities whom one of themselves has called the Windbags. Let not us be like them. I hear among men so much vain speech, so much precious breath and precious time wasted in empty boasts, foolish anger, useless reiteration, blatant argument, ignoble mouthings, that I have learned to deem speech a curse, laid on man to weaken

and envenom all his undertakings. For over two hundred years I have never spoken myself: you, I hear, are not so reticent. I only speak now because one of you said a beautiful thing that touched me. If we all might but go back to our makers! Ah, yes! if we might! We were made in days when even men were true creatures, and so we, the work of their hands, were true too. We, the begotten of ancient days, derive all the value in us from the fact that our makers wrought at us with zeal, with piety, with integrity, with faith,—not to win fortunes or to glut a market, but to do nobly an honest thing and create for the honor of the Arts and God. I see amidst you a little human thing who loves me, and in his own ignorant childish way loves Art. Now, I want him forever to remember this night and these words; to remember that we are what we are, and precious in the eyes of the world, because centuries ago those who were of single mind and of pure hand so created us, scorning sham and haste and counterfeit. Well do I recollect my master, Augustin Hirschvogel. He led a wise and blameless life, and wrought in loyalty and love, and made his time beautiful thereby, like one of his own rich, many-colored church casements, that told holy tales as the sun streamed through them. Ah, yes, my friends, to go back to our masters!—that would be the best that could befall us. But they are gone, and even the perishable labors of their lives outlive them. For many, many years I, once honored of emperors, dwelt in a humble house and warmed in successive winters three generations of little, cold, hungry children. When I warmed them they forgot that they were

hungry; they laughed and told tales, and slept at last about my feet. Then I knew that humble as had become my lot it was one that my master would have wished for me, and I was content. Sometimes a tired woman would creep up to me, and smile because she was near me, and point out my golden crown or my ruddy fruit to a baby in her arms. That was better than to stand in a great hall of a great city, cold and empty, even though wise men came to gaze and throngs of fools gaped, passing with flattering words. Where I go now I know not; but since I go from that humble house where they loved me, I shall be sad and alone. They pass so soon,—those fleeting mortal lives! Only we endure,—we, the things that the human brain creates. We can but bless them a little as they glide by: if we have done that, we have done what our masters wished. So in us our masters, being dead, yet may speak and live."

Then the voice sank away in silence, and a strange golden light that had shone on the great stove faded away; so also the light died down in the silver candelabra. A soft, pathetic melody stole gently through the room. It came from the old, old spinnet that was covered with the faded roses.

Then that sad, sighing music of a bygone day died too; the clocks of the city struck six of the morning; day was rising over the Bayerischenwald. August awoke with a great start, and found himself lying on the bare bricks of the floor of the chamber, and all the *bric-à-brac* was lying quite still all around. The pretty Lady of Meissen was motionless on her porcelain bracket, and the little Saxe poodle was quiet at her side.

He rose slowly to his feet. He was very cold, but he was not sensible of it or of the hunger that was gnawing his little empty entrails. He was absorbed in the wondrous sight, in the wondrous sounds, that he had seen and heard.

All was dark around him. Was it still midnight or had morning come? Morning, surely; for against the barred shutters he heard the tiny song of the robin.

Tramp, tramp, too, came a heavy step up the stair. He had but a moment in which to scramble back into the interior of the great stove, when the door opened and the two dealers entered, bringing burning candles with them to see their way.

August was scarcely conscious of danger more than he was of cold or hunger. A marvellous sense of courage, of security, of happiness, was about him, like strong and gentle arms enfolding him and lifting him upwards—upwards—upwards! Hirschvogel would defend him.

The dealers undid the shutters, scaring the redbreast away, and then tramped about in their heavy boots and chattered in contented voices, and began to wrap up the stove once more in all its straw and hay and cordage.

It never once occurred to them to glance inside. Why should they look inside a stove that they had bought and were about to sell again for all its glorious beauty of exterior?

The child still did not feel afraid. A great exaltation had come to him: he was like one lifted up by his angels.

Presently the two traders called up their porters,

and the stove, heedfully swathed and wrapped and tended as though it were some sick prince going on a journey, was borne on the shoulders of six stout Bavarians down the stairs and out of the door into the Marienplatz. Even behind all those wrappings August felt the icy bite of the intense cold of the outer air at dawn of a winter's day in Munich. The men moved the stove with exceeding gentleness and care, so that he had often been far more roughly shaken in his big brothers' arms than he was in his journey now; and though both hunger and thirst made themselves felt, being foes that will take no denial, he was still in that state of nervous exaltation which deadens all physical suffering and is at once a cordial and an opiate. He had heard Hirschvogel speak; that was enough.

The stout carriers tramped through the city, six of them, with the Nürnberg fire-castle on their brawny shoulders, and went right across Munich to the railway-station, and August in the dark recognized all the ugly, jangling, pounding, roaring, hissing railway-noises, and thought, despite his courage and excitement, "Will it be a *very* long journey?" For his stomach had at times an odd sinking sensation, and his head sadly often felt light and swimming. If it was a very, very long journey he felt half afraid that he would be dead or something bad before the end, and Hirschvogel would be so lonely: that was what he thought most about; not much about himself, and not much about Dorothea and the house at home. He was "high strung to high emprise," and could not look behind him.

Whether for a long or a short journey, whether for

weal or woe, the stove with August still within it was once more hoisted up into a great van; but this time it was not all alone, and the two dealers as well as the six porters were all with it.

He in his darkness knew that; for he heard their voices. The train glided away over the Bavarian plain southward; and he heard the men say something of Berg and the Wurm-See, but their German was strange to him, and he could not make out what these names meant.

The train rolled on, with all its fume and fuss, and roar of steam, and stench of oil and burning coal. It had to go quietly and slowly on account of the snow which was falling, and which had fallen all night.

"He might have waited till he came to the city," grumbled one man to another. "What weather to stay on at Berg!"

But who he was that stayed on at Berg, August could not make out at all.

Though the men grumbled about the state of the roads and the season, they were hilarious and well content, for they laughed often, and, when they swore, did so good-humoredly, and promised their porters fine presents at New-Year; and August, like a shrewd little boy as he was, who even in the secluded Innthal had learned that money is the chief mover of men's mirth, thought to himself, with a terrible pang,—

"They have sold Hirschvogel for some great sum! They have sold him already!"

Then his heart grew faint and sick within him, for he knew very well that he must soon die, shut up without food and water thus; and what new owner of

the great fire-palace would ever permit him to dwell in it?

"Never mind; I *will* die," thought he; "and Hirschvogel will know it."

Perhaps you think him a very foolish little fellow; but I do not.

It is always good to be loyal and ready to endure to the end.

It is but an hour and a quarter that the train usually takes to pass from Munich to the Wurm-See or Lake of Starnberg; but this morning the journey was much slower, because the way was encumbered by snow. When it did reach Possenhofen and stop, and the Nürnberg stove was lifted out once more, August could see through the fret-work of the brass door, as the stove stood upright facing the lake, that this Wurm-See was a calm and noble piece of water, of great width, with low wooded banks and distant mountains, a peaceful, serene place, full of rest.

It was now near ten o'clock. The sun had come forth; there was a clear gray sky hereabouts; the snow was not falling, though it lay white and smooth everywhere, down to the edge of the water, which before long would itself be ice.

Before he had time to get more than a glimpse of the green gliding surface, the stove was again lifted up and placed on a large boat that was in waiting,—one of those very long and huge boats which the women in these parts use as laundries, and the men as timber-rafts. The stove, with much labor and much expenditure of time and care, was hoisted into this, and August would have grown sick and giddy with

the heaving and falling if his big brothers had not long used him to such tossing about, so that he was as much at ease head, as feet, downward. The stove once in it safely with its guardians, the big boat moved across the lake to Leoni. How a little hamlet on a Bavarian lake got that Tuscan-sounding name I cannot tell; but Leoni it is. The big boat was a long time crossing: the lake here is about three miles broad, and these heavy barges are unwieldy and heavy to move, even though they are towed and tugged at from the shore.

"If we should be too late!" the two dealers muttered to each other, in agitation and alarm. "He said eleven o'clock."

"Who was he?" thought August; "the buyer, of course, of Hirschvogel." The slow passage across the Wurm-See was accomplished at length: the lake was placid; there was a sweet calm in the air and on the water; there was a great deal of snow in the sky, though the sun was shining and gave a solemn hush to the atmosphere. Boats and one little steamer were going up and down; in the clear frosty light the distant mountains of Zillerthal and the Algau Alps were visible; market-people, cloaked and furred, went by on the water or on the banks; the deep woods of the shores were black and gray and brown. Poor August could see nothing of a scene that would have delighted him; as the stove was now set, he could only see the old worm-eaten wood of the huge barge.

Presently they touched the pier at Leoni.

"Now, men, for a stout mile and half! You shall drink your reward at Christmas-time," said one of the

dealers to his porters, who, stout, strong men as they were, showed a disposition to grumble at their task. Encouraged by large promises, they shouldered sullenly the Nürnberg stove, grumbling again at its preposterous weight, but little dreaming that they carried within it a small, panting, trembling boy; for August began to tremble now that he was about to see the future owner of Hirschvogel.

"If he look a good, kind man," he thought, "I will beg him to let me stay with it."

The porters began their toilsome journey, and moved off from the village pier. He could see nothing, for the brass door was over his head, and all that gleamed through it was the clear gray sky. He had been tilted on to his back, and if he had not been a little mountaineer, used to hanging head-downwards over crevasses, and, moreover, seasoned to rough treatment by the hunters and guides of the hills and the salt-workers in the town, he would have been made ill and sick by the bruising and shaking and many changes of position to which he had been subjected.

The way the men took was a mile and a half in length, but the road was heavy with snow, and the burden they bore was heavier still. The dealers cheered them on, swore at them and praised them in one breath; besought them and reiterated their splendid promises, for a clock was striking eleven, and they had been ordered to reach their destination at that hour, and, though the air was so cold, the heat-drops rolled off their foreheads as they walked, they were so frightened at being late. But the porters would not budge a foot quicker than they chose, and as they were

not poor four-footed carriers their employers dared not thrash them, though most willingly would they have done so.

The road seemed terribly long to the anxious tradesmen, to the plodding porters, to the poor little man inside the stove, as he kept sinking and rising, sinking and rising, with each of their steps.

Where they were going he had no idea, only after a very long time he lost the sense of the fresh icy wind blowing on his face through the brass-work above, and felt by their movements beneath him that they were mounting steps or stairs. Then he heard a great many different voices, but he could not understand what was being said. He felt that his bearers paused some time, then moved on and on again. Their feet went so softly he thought they must be moving on carpet, and as he felt a warm air come to him he concluded that he was in some heated chambers, for he was a clever little fellow, and could put two and two together, though he was so hungry and so thirsty and his empty stomach felt so strangely. They must have gone, he thought, through some very great number of rooms, for they walked so long on and on, on and on. At last the stove was set down again, and, happily for him, set so that his feet were downward.

What he fancied was that he was in some museum, like that which he had seen in the city of Innspruck.

The voices he heard were very hushed, and the steps seemed to go away, far away, leaving him alone with Hirschvogel. He dared not look out, but he peeped through the brass-work, and all he could see was a big carved lion's head in ivory, with a gold crown atop. It

belonged to a velvet fauteuil, but he could not see the chair, only the ivory lion.

There was a delicious fragrance in the air,—a fragrance as of flowers. "Only how can it be flowers?" thought August. "It is November!"

From afar off, as it seemed, there came a dreamy, exquisite music, as sweet as the spinnet's had been, but so much fuller, so much richer, seeming as though a chorus of angels were singing all together. August ceased to think of the museum: he thought of heaven. "Are we gone to the Master?" he thought, remembering the words of Hirschvogel.

All was so still around him; there was no sound anywhere except the sound of the far-off choral music.

He did not know it, but he was in the royal castle of Berg, and the music he heard was the music of Wagner, who was playing in a distant room some of the motives of "Parsival."

Presently he heard a fresh step near him, and he heard a low voice say, close behind him, "So!" An exclamation no doubt, he thought, of admiration and wonder at the beauty of Hirschvogel.

Then the same voice said, after a long pause, during which no doubt, as August thought, this new-comer was examining all the details of the wondrous fire-tower, "It was well bought; it is exceedingly beautiful! It is most undoubtedly the work of Augustin Hirschvogel."

Then the hand of the speaker turned the round handle of the brass door, and the fainting soul of the poor little prisoner within grew sick with fear.

The handle turned, the door was slowly drawn open.

some one bent down and looked in, and the same voice that he had heard in praise of its beauty called aloud, in surprise, "What is this in it? A live child!"

Then August, terrified beyond all self-control, and dominated by one master-passion, sprang out of the body of the stove and fell at the feet of the speaker.

"Oh, let me stay! Pray, meinherr, let me stay!" he sobbed. "I have come all the way with Hirschvogel!"

Some gentlemen's hands seized him, not gently by any means, and their lips angrily muttered in his ear, "Little knave, peace! be quiet! hold your tongue! It is the king!"

They were about to drag him out of the august atmosphere as if he had been some venomous, dangerous beast come there to slay, but the voice he had heard speak of the stove said, in kind accents, "Poor little child! he is very young. Let him go: let him speak to me."

The word of a king is law to his courtiers: so, sorely against their wish, the angry and astonished chamberlains let August slide out of their grasp, and he stood there in his little rough sheepskin coat and his thick, mud-covered boots, with his curling hair all in a tangle, in the midst of the most beautiful chamber he had ever dreamed of, and in the presence of a young man with a beautiful dark face, and eyes full of dreams and fire; and the young man said to him,—

"My child, how came you here, hidden in this stove? Be not afraid: tell me the truth. I am the king."

August in an instinct of homage cast his great

battered black hat with the tarnished gold tassels down on the floor of the room, and folded his little brown hands in supplication. He was too intensely in earnest to be in any way abashed; he was too lifted out of himself by his love for Hirschvogel to be conscious of any awe before any earthly majesty. He was only so glad—so glad it was the king. Kings were always kind; so the Tyrolese think, who love their lords.

"Oh, dear king!" he said, with trembling entreaty in his faint little voice, "Hirschvogel was ours, and we have loved it all our lives; and father sold it. And when I saw that it did really go from us, then I said to myself I would go with it; and I have come all the way inside it. And last night it spoke and said beautiful things. And I do pray you to let me live with it, and I will go out every morning and cut wood for it and you, if only you will let me stay beside it. No one ever has fed it with fuel but me since I grew big enough, and it loves me;—it does indeed; it said so last night; and it said that it had been happier with us than if it were in any palace——"

And then his breath failed him, and, as he lifted his little, eager, pale face to the young king's, great tears were falling down his cheeks.

Now, the king likes all poetic and uncommon things, and there was that in the child's face which pleased and touched him. He motioned to his gentlemen to leave the little boy alone.

"What is your name?" he asked him.

"I am August Strehla. My father is Hans Strehla We live in Hall, in the Innthal; and Hirschvogel has been ours so long,—so long!"

His lips quivered with a broken sob.

"And have you truly travelled inside this stove all the way from Tyrol?"

"Yes," said August; "no one thought to look inside till you did.

The king laughed; then another view of the matter occurred to him.

"Who bought the stove of your father?" he inquired.

"Traders of Munich," said August, who did not know that he ought not to have spoken to the king as to a simple citizen, and whose little brain was whirling and spinning dizzily round its one central idea.

"What sum did they pay your father, do you know?" asked the sovereign.

"Two hundred florins," said August, with a great sigh of shame. "It was so much money, and he is so poor, and there are so many of us."

The king turned to his gentlemen-in-waiting. "Did these dealers of Munich come with the stove."

He was answered in the affirmative. He desired them to be sought for and brought before him. As one of his chamberlains hastened on the errand, the monarch looked at August with compassion.

"You are very pale, little fellow: when did you eat last?"

"I had some bread and sausage with me; yesterday afternoon I finished it."

"You would like to eat now?"

"If I might have a little water I would be glad; my throat is very dry."

The king had water and wine brought for him, and

cake also; but August, though he drank eagerly, could not swallow anything. His mind was in too great a tumult.

"May I stay with Hirschvogel?—may I stay?" he said, with feverish agitation.

"Wait a little," said the king, and asked, abruptly, "What do you wish to be when you are a man?"

"A painter. I wish to be what Hirschvogel was,—I mean the master that made *my* Hirschvogel."

"I understand," said the king.

Then the two dealers were brought into their sovereign's presence. They were so terribly alarmed, not being either so innocent or so ignorant as August was, that they were trembling as though they were being led to the slaughter, and they were so utterly astonished too at a child having come all the way from Tyrol in the stove, as a gentleman of the court had just told them this child had done, that they could not tell what to say or where to look, and presented a very foolish aspect indeed.

"Did you buy this Nürnberg stove of this little boy's father for two hundred florins?" the king asked them; and his voice was no longer soft and kind as it had been when addressing the child, but very stern.

"Yes, your majesty," murmured the trembling traders.

"And how much did the gentleman who purchased it for me give to you?"

"Two thousand ducats, your majesty," muttered the dealers, frightened out of their wits, and telling the truth in their fright.

The gentleman was not present: he was a trusted

counsellor in art matters of the king's, and often made purchases for him.

The king smiled a little, and said nothing. The gentleman had made out the price to him as eleven thousand ducats.

"You will give at once to this boy's father the two thousand gold ducats that you received, less the two hundred Austrian florins that you paid him," said the king to his humiliated and abject subjects. "You are great rogues. Be thankful you are not more greatly punished."

He dismissed them by a sign to his courtiers, and to one of these gave the mission of making the dealers of the Marienplatz disgorge their ill-gotten gains.

August heard, and felt dazzled yet miserable. Two thousand gold Bavarian ducats for his father! Why, his father would never need to go any more to the salt-baking! And yet, whether for ducats or for florins, Hirschvogel was sold just the same, and would the king let him stay with it?—would he?

"Oh, do! oh, please do!" he murmured, joining his little brown weather-stained hands, and kneeling down before the young monarch, who himself stood absorbed in painful thought, for the deception so basely practised for the greedy sake of gain on him by a trusted counsellor was bitter to him.

He looked down on the child, and as he did so smiled once more.

"Rise up, my little man," he said, in a kind voice; "kneel only to your God. Will I let you stay with your Hirschvogel? Yes, I will; you shall stay at my court, and you shall be taught to be a painter,—in oils

or on porcelain as you will,—and you must grow up worthily, and win all the laurels at our Schools of Art, and if when you are twenty-one years old you have done well and bravely, then I will give you your Nürnberg stove, or, if I am no more living, then those who reign after me shall do so. And now go away with this gentleman, and be not afraid, and you shall light a fire every morning in Hirschvogel, but you will not need to go out and cut the wood."

Then he smiled and stretched out his hand; the courtiers tried to make August understand that he ought to bow and touch it with his lips, but August could not understand that anyhow; he was too happy. He threw his two arms about the king's knees, and kissed his feet passionately; then he lost all sense of where he was, and fainted away from hunger, and tire, and emotion, and wondrous joy.

As the darkness of his swoon closed in on him, he heard in his fancy the voice from Hirschvogel saying,—

"Let us be worthy our maker!"

He is only a scholar yet, but he is a happy scholar, and promises to be a great man. Sometimes he goes back for a few days to Hall, where the gold ducats have made his father prosperous. In the old house-room there is a large white porcelain stove of Munich, the king's gift to Dorothea and 'Gilda.

And August never goes home without going into the great church and saying his thanks to God, who blessed his strange winter's journey in the Nürnberg stove. As for his dream in the dealers' room that night, he will never admit that he did dream it; he

still declares that he saw it all, and heard the voice of Hirschvogel. And who shall say that he did not? for what is the gift of the poet and the artist except to see the sights which others cannot see and to hear the sounds that others cannot hear?

IN THE APPLE-COUNTRY

"LET US REST A LITTLE AND EAT"

IN THE APPLE-COUNTRY

It was in one of the green lanes of South Devonshire that Gemma, being quite tired out, threw herself down on the daisied grass and said to her grandfather,—

"Nonno, let us rest a little and eat." Her grandfather said to her,—

"*Carina mia*, I would eat gladly, but we have nothing to eat. The satchel is empty."

Gemma, lying chest downward on the turf, sighed, and buried her hands in her abundant curls and cooled her forehead on the damp grass. She was just thirteen years old, and she was so pretty that she made the heart of the old grandfather ache often when he looked at her and thought that she would most likely soon be left alone in the world, for her little brother Bindo could not be said to count for anything, being only ten years old. Gemma was very lovely indeed, being tall and lithe and gay, and full of grace, and having a beautiful changeable face, all light and color. But she was only thirteen, and all she could do to get her livelihood was to dance the *saltarello* and the *tarantella*. She and her brother danced, which they did very prettily, and the old man whom they called Nonno told fortunes and performed some simple conjuring tricks, and these were all bad trades as times went, for nowadays nobody

amuses himself with simple things, and the rural folk have grown as sharp and as serious as the city people, which to my thinking is a very great loss to the world, for merry people are generally kind people, and contented people are easily governed, and have no appetites for politics and philosophies and the like indigestible things.

Nonno and Gemma and Bindo were merry enough even on empty stomachs. The old man was as simple as a duck, and as gentle as a rabbit, and was rather more of a child than either of the children. Bindo was a little, round, playful, gleeful thing, like a little field-mouse, and Gemma was as gay as a lark, though she had to bear the burden of the only brains that there were in the family.

They were little Neapolitans; they had been born in a little cabin on the sunny shore facing Ischia, and in their infancy had tumbled about naked and glad as young dolphins in the bright blue waters. Then their parents had died,—their father at sea, their mother of fever,—and left them to the care of Nonno; Nonno, who was very old, so old that they thought he must have been made almost before the world itself, and who, after having been a showman of puppets to divert the poorest classes all his life, was so very poor himself then that he could hardly scrape enough together to get a little drink of thin wine and an inch or two of polenta. Being so very poor, he was seduced into accepting an engagement for himself and the children with a wicked man whose business it was in life to decoy poor little Italians and make money out of them in foreign lands. Nonno was so good and simple himself that he thought every

body was as harmless as he was, and his grief and amazement were very great when on reaching the English shores with this wicked man he found that the wicked man meant to give him the slip altogether and go off with the two children. By a mere hazard, Nonno, whose name was Epifania Santo (a droll name, but he himself had been a foundling), was able to defeat the wicked man so far that he got out of his clutches and took his grandchildren with him. But there they all three were in England, with no money at all, and nothing on earth but a few puppets, and a conjurer's box of playthings, and the stilts on which the wicked man had had the children taught to walk. And in England they had now been four years, remaining there chiefly because they had no notion how to get home again, and partly because Nonno had such a great terror of the sea. He had suffered so much on the long voyage into which he had been entrapped from Naples, round by the Bay of Biscay up the Bristol Channel, that he would sooner have died there and then than have set foot again on board a sea-going vessel. So in England they had stayed, wandering about and picking up a few pence in villages and towns, and clinging together tenderly, and being very often hungry, cold, tired, roofless, but yet being all the while happy.

Sometimes, too, they fared well: the children's brilliant uncommon beauty and pretty foreign accent often touched country-people's hearts, and sometimes they would get bed and board at homely farm-houses high on lonely hills, or be made welcome without payment in little wayside inns. They had kept to the south-

west part of the kingdom, never being able to afford other means of locomotion than their own feet, and the farthest distance they had ever compassed had been this far-south country-side, where the green woods and pastures roll down to the broad estuaries of Exe and Dart. This green, wet, shadowy country always seemed strange to the children; for a long while they thought it was always evening in England. They could remember the long sunshiny years at home, and the radiant air, and the blue, clear sky, and the sea that seemed always laughing. They could never forget it indeed, and when they were together they never talked of anything else: only the cactus-fruit and the green and black figs, the red tomatoes and the rough pomegranates, and the big balls of gold to be had in the orange woods just for the plucking; the boats with the pretty striped sails, and the villas with the marbles and the palms, and the islands all aglow in the sunset, and the distance you could see looking away, away, away into the immeasurable azure of the air. Oh, yes, they remembered it all, and at night they would weep for it, the old man's slow salt tears mingling with the passionate rain of the childish eyes. Here it was green and pretty in its own way, but all so dark, so wet, so misty!

"When I try to see, there is a white wall of shadow,—I think it is shadow; perhaps it is fog, but it is always there," said Gemma. "At home one looks, and looks, and looks; there is no end to it."

Gemma longed sorely to go home; she had not minded the sea at all. Bindo, like Nonno, had been very ill on the voyage, and cried even now whenever

he saw a ship, for fear he should be going in it. Bindo was sadly babyish for ten years old; to make amends, his sister was almost a woman at thirteen.

They ought now to have been all three serious and alarmed, for Nonno's satchel had not a penny in it, nor a crust, and they were all hungry, for it was noonday. But instead of being miserable they joked, and laughed, and kissed each other, as thousands of their country-folks at home with equally empty stomachs were doing, lying on sunny moles, or marble-strewn benches, or thymy turf under ilex shadows. But then in our dear Italy there is always the sun, the light, the air that kisses and feeds and sends to soft sleep her children, and Gemma and her brother and grandfather were in a wet English lane, with the clouds hurrying up over the distant hills by Dartmoor, and the raindrops still hanging to the great elm-boughs overhead.

Yet they were merry, and sang snatches of Neapolitan songs, and took no thought for the morrow. They were not far off Dartmouth, and they meant to go into the quaint old town by market-day, and the Dart fisher- and boating-folk were always kind to them. If they were hungry now they would eat to-morrow.

Suddenly, however, Nonno grew thoughtful as he looked at Gemma, lying face downward on the wet grass, her sandalled feet in air, a dragon-fly fluttering above her head.

"What would you do if I were to die, my *piccicotta?*" said the poor old man, all at once remembering he was nigh eighty years old. Gemma raised herself, and said nothing. Her eyes, which were very beautiful eyes, grew sad and moist.

"I would take care of Bindo, Nonno," she answered, at last. "Do not be afraid of that."

"But how? It is easy to say. But how?"

"I suppose I could dance at theatres," said Gemma after reflection. Nonno shook his head.

"For the theatres you would need to dance differently: it is all spinning, craning, drilling there; you dance, my child, as a flower in the wind. The theatres do not care for that."

"Then I do not know," said Gemma. "But something I would do. Bindo should not suffer."

"You are a good child," said the old man, tenderly. She sank down again on the grass.

"Do not think of dying, Nonno," she said. "It is all so dark where death is."

"Not when one gets to the saints," said the simple old man. He always fancied Paradise just like Amalfi, —his own Amalfi, where long ago, so long ago, he had run and leaped, a merry naked boy, in the azure waves, and caught the glittering sea-mouse and the pink column of the gemmia in his hands. Paradise would be just like Amalfi; the promise of it consoled him as he trotted on tired limbs along the wet gravel of English market-roads, or meekly bore the noisy horse-play of English village crowds.

The rain had ceased, and the sun was shining a little in a drowsy half-hearted way, as if it were but half awake even at mid-day. There were big hedges on either side of the lane, and broad strips of turf. These lanes are almost all that is left of the rural and leafy old England of Seventeen Hundred; and they are beautiful in their own way when midsummer crowds

them with flowers, and in spring when their palm-willows blossom, and in autumn when their hazel-coppices are brown with nuts, and in winter when their holly and ivy clamber high, and their fine trees make a tracery of bare boughs delicate as the net-work of lace against the gray skies.

On the other side of the hedge, to their right, there was a large corn-field; it was now the time when wheat is ripe in England, and the men and women who were reaping it were sitting, resting, drinking their cider and eating their noonday bread and bacon. Bindo watched them through a hole in the hedge, and began to cry.

"It makes me hungrier to see them eat!" he said, with a sob. Gemma sprang to her feet.

"Do not cry so, my Bindo," she said, with a tender voice: "I will ask them to give you some."

She thrust her lithe body through the gap, and walked boldly across the field,—a strange figure for an English corn-field, with her short white skirt, and her red bodice, and her striped sash of many colors, and her little coral ear-rings in her ears; she was bareheaded, and her dusky gold hair, the hair that the old painters loved, was coiled rope-like all around her small head.

"My little brother is hungry: will you be so very gentle and give us a little bread?" she said, in her pretty accent, which robbed the English tongue of all its gutturals and clothed it in a sweetness not its own. She was not fond of begging, being proud, and she colored very much as she said it.

The reapers stared, then grinned, gaped once or twice, and then stretched big brown hands out to her with goodly portions of food, and one added a mug of cider.

"I do thank you so much," she said, with a smile that was like a sunbeam. "The drink I take not, for Nonno has no love of it; but for the bread I pray may San Martino bless you!"

Then she courtesied to them, as nature and nobody else had taught her to do, and ran away, fleet as a lapwing, with her treasure.

"'Tis that dancing-girl of the Popish country," said the men one to another, and added that if the master caught her in his lane 'twould be the worse for her, for he couldna abide tramps and vagabon's. But Gemma, who knew nothing of that, was sharing her spoils with glee, and breaking the small bit of bread she allowed to herself with teeth as white as a dog's.

"The way to Dartmouth will not now seem so long," she said, and Bindo nodded his head with a mouth quite full of good brown bread and fat bacon.

"How much do they love *carne secca* here!" said Nonno, with a sigh, thinking of the long coils of macaroni, the lovely little fried fish, the oil, the garlic, the black beans, that he never saw now, alas, alas! "The land is fat, but the people they know not how to live," he added, with a sigh. "A people without wine,—what should they know?"

"They make good bread," said Gemma, with her ivory teeth in a crust.

Meantime, the person who owned the lane was coming out into the fields to see how his men got on with their work. His house stood near, hidden in trees on a bend of the Exe. He was rich, young, prosperous, and handsome; he was also generous and charitable; but he was a magistrate, and he hated

strollers. By name he was known as Philip Carey; his people had been squires here for many generations; he called himself a yeoman, and was as proud as if he were a prince.

As fates would have it, he rode down the lane now on his gray horse, and when he saw the group of Nonno and Gemma and Bindo, with their bags and bales and bundles, scattered about on the turf of his lane, his gray eyes grew ominously dark.

"Who gave you leave to come here?" he asked, sternly enough, as he reined up his horse.

Nonno looked up smiling, and stood up and bowed with grace and ease. The English tongue he had never been able to master: he glanced at Gemma to bid her answer.

"We were only resting, Excellenza," said she, boldly. "It is a public road."

"It is not a public road," said the owner of it. "And if it were, you would have no right to cumber it. Are you strollers?"

"Strollers?" repeated Gemma: she did not understand the word.

"Tramps? Are you tramps?"

"We are artists," said Gemma.

"What do you do for your living?" asked her judge.

"We dance," she answered, "and Nonno yonder he does conjuring tricks, and sometimes has a little lotto, but that is only when we have got a little money: we have none now."

"A lottery!" exclaimed Mr. Carey, whose face grew very stern. "You are mere idle vagabonds, then, when you are not worse. Do you live by your wits?"

"We dance," said Gemma, again.

"Dance! Can you read and write?"

"Oh, no."

"How old are you?"

"I am thirteen, Bindo is ten, Nonno is—is—is, oh, as old as the world."

"Is he your grandfather?"

"That is what you say in English. We say Nonno."

"Cannot he speak English?"

"No: he has lost his teeth, and it is so hard, is your English."

"You are an impudent girl."

Gemma smiled her beautiful shining smile, as if he had paid her an admirable compliment.

She knew the rider by sight very well, though he did not know her. His housekeeper had whipped Bindo for getting into her poultry-house and putting two eggs in his pocket, and his gardener one day had turned them both out of his orchards as trespassers, so that he and his residence of Carey's Honor were already scored with black in the tablets of the children's memories.

That he was a handsome young man, with a grave and pensive face and a very sweet smile, when he did smile, which was rarely, did not affect Gemma's dislike to him: she was too young to be impressed by good looks. Philip Carey was not touched by the beauty of her either: he scarcely saw that she was pretty, he was so angry with her for what seemed to him her saucy answers.

"Why are you not dressed like a Christian?" he said, somewhat irrelevantly.

"I am a Christian," said Gemma, angry in her turn, —"a better Christian than you are. And what is my dress to you? You do not buy it."

"It is immodest."

"Oh! oh!" cried Gemma, with a flame-like lightning in her eyes; and like lightning she leaped up on to the saddle and gave the astonished gentleman a sounding box on both ears.

He was so utterly astonished that he had no time to protect himself, and his horse, which was utterly astonished too, began to plunge and rear and kick, and fully occupied him, whilst a guffaw from the field beyond added to his rage by telling him that his reapers had witnessed his discomfiture.

Gemma had leaped to the ground as swiftly as she had leaped to the saddle, and, whilst the horse was rearing and plunging, had caught up their bag and baggage, had pushed and pulled her brother and her grandfather before her, and had flown down the lane and out of sight before Philip Carey had reduced his steed to any semblance of reason. His ears tingled and his pride was bitterly incensed, yet he could not help laughing at himself.

"The little tigress!" he thought, as he endeavored to soothe his fretting and wheeling beast, which was young and only half broken.

When he rode in at last by an open gate among his reapers the men were all too afraid of him not to wear very grave faces, as though they had seen nothing. Every one was afraid of Philip Carey except his dogs, which shows that he had a good heart under a stern manner, for dogs never make mistakes as men do.

He remained about his fields all the day, and went home to a solitary dinner. He had no living relative. He was rather more of a scholar than a farmer, and liked his loneliness. His old house, which was called Carey's Honor ever since the days of the Tudors, was a rambling comfortable building, set amidst green lawn, huge hew- and oak-trees, and meadows that stretched downward to the broad Dart water. It was all within and without as it had been in the days of the Armada, and the ivy that covered it was as old as the brass dogs in the big chimney-places. Many men with such a possession would have been restless to reach a higher rank, but Philip Carey was a grave young man, of refined and severe taste and simple habits. He loved his home, and was content with it, and wanted nothing of the world.

This evening he did not feel so contented as usual: his ears seemed still to tingle from those blows at the hand of a child. He liked old Greek and Latin authors, and when the day was done liked to sit and read of a summer evening under the biggest yew upon his lawn, with the lowing of the cattle, the song of the nightingale, and the cries of the water-birds the only sounds upon the quiet air. But this evening his favorite philosophers said nothing to him: had Plato or any one of them ever had his ears boxed by a little fury of a strolling dancer?

The little fury, meanwhile, was dancing the *saltarello* with her brother before a crazy old wooden inn in Dartmouth,—dancing it as the girls do under the cork-trees in Sardinia, and under the spreading oaks of the Marches, and so pleasing the yokels of the river town

with her grace and fire and animation that the pence rolled in by scores into her tambourine, and the mistress of the poor little inn said to her, "Nay, my pretty, as you have gained them here you must spend them here, and it is market-day to-morrow."

Gemma was quite happy to have gained so much, and she got a modest little supper for Nonno, and as she shook down all her dark gold hair in the moonlight and looked on the water rippling away past the walls of the old castle she laughed out, though she was all alone, thinking of the grave gentleman on the gray horse, and murmured naughtily to herself, "I hope I did hurt him! Oh, I hope I hurt him!"

Then she knew she ought not to hope that, and kissed the Madonnina that hung at her throat, and asked the Holy Mother's pardon, and then laid herself down on the little hard bed and went as sound asleep as a flittermouse in winter-time.

The next day was market-day in the little sleepy Old-World town upon the Dart, where the ships and the boats go by on the gray sea and the brown river-water. There would be watermen and countrymen, both, in numbers, farmers and fisherfolk, millers and cider-merchants, peddlers and hucksters, and egg-wives and wagoners, and Nonno was early awakened by the children, who were eager to begin getting more pence with the sunrise: the pence when they *were* made had such a terrible knack of flying away again. Gemma believed that they grew wings like the butterflies, though she never could see them, and though she and Nonno kept such close watch and ward over them.

They made themselves as spruce as they could for

the day. Gemma had washed her white bodice and Bindo's white shirt, and, though the scarlet and the blue and the yellow had got stained and weather-worn, the clothes yet were picturesque, and with their curling hair, and their beautiful big black eyes, and their cheeks as warm and as soft as peaches, she and Bindo were a pretty sight as they bent and swayed and circled and moved, now so slowly, now so furiously, in the changes of the *saltarello*, whilst their grandfather played for them on a little wooden flute, and Gemma beat her tambourine high above her auburn head, and, as the music waxed faster and the dance wilder, sprang and whirled and leaped and bounded for all the world, the people said, like the jack-o'-lantern that flashes over the bogs of Dartmoor.

They danced, with pauses for rest between their dances, all the day long; and when they were so very tired that they could dance no more, Nonno began his simple tricks with his thimble and peas, his wooden cups, and his little tray full of cards. They were innocent tricks, and when he told fortunes by the cards (which Gemma expounded to whosoever would pay a penny to hear the future) he dealt out fate so handsomely that such a destiny was very cheap indeed at four farthings.

The country-folks were pleased and content to have a gilt coach and horses and all manner of good luck promised them over the cards, and the youths liked to look at pretty Gemma, who was so unlike the maidens they picked apples with, or sold pilchards to, in their green Devon; and so the day wore merrily on apace, and the afternoon sun was slanting towards its setting over the Cornish shores and Cornish seas far away to

the westward, when all in a moment there was a shout of "Police! Police!" and the good-humored crowd hustled together and made way, and two constables with wooden truncheons, saying never a word, marched up to the poor little tray-table, swept off it cards and coins and conjuring toys, and arrested poor old trembling Nonno in the sacred name of the Law!

Nonno began to scream a million words to a minute, but, alas! they were all Italian words, nobody understood one of them. Bindo sobbed, and Gemma, standing a moment transfixed with horror, flew upon the constable who had taken her poor old grandfather and bit his arm till the blood spurted. Mad with pain, the constable seized her, not gently, and clutched Bindo by the collar with his other hand. There was no possibility of resistance; Gemma fought, indeed, like a little polecat, but the men were too strong for her; they soon took her away through the crowd on the same road that Nonno was taking peaceably, and when the crowd muttered a little at its play being thus spoiled, the constables only said, gruffly, "Get you out of the way, or ye'll be clapped in jail too, maybe; thimble-rigging, card-sharping, posturing, gambling, swindling,—why, this old dodger will have a month of treadmill if he have a day!"

And the crowd said among itself that to be sure the old fellow was a foreigner, it would not do to get into trouble about him, and most likely he only made believe to know the future; so left him to himself, and went to the alehouses and consoled themselves for his misfortunes in draughts of cider.

The two constables, meanwhile, consigned the old

man and his grandchildren to the lock-up: Nonno kept sighing and sobbing, and asking innumerable questions in his own tongue, and Bindo shrieked at the top of his voice as he was dragged along; Gemma alone, now that she was vanquished, was mute. Her lips were shut and silent, but her eyes spoke, darting out flames of fire as if Vesuvius itself were burning behind them. For four whole years they had been wandering about the southwest part of England, and had done no less and no more than they had done to-day, and never had they been told that it was wrong.

How could it be wrong to make a pea jump away from under a wooden cup, and promise a ploughman or a wagoner a coach and horses if it pleased him? For if Nonno did cheat a little, ever so little, poor old man, the children did not know it, and whatever Nonno did was always to them alike virtue and wisdom.

The constables were very angry with them; Gemma had bitten one of them as if she were a little wild-cat, and the old man seemed to them a sorry old rascal, living by his wits and his tricks and promising the yokels coaches-and-six to turn a penny. Foreigners are not favored by the rural police in England; and whether they have plaster casts, dancing bears, singing children, performing mice or monkeys, or only a few conjuring toys, like poor old Epifania Santo, it is all one to the rural police: down they go as members of the dangerous classes. If the market-folks wanted diversion, there were good, honest Punch and Judy generally to be seen on fair-days; and once or twice a

year, at the great cider or horse fairs, there came always a show, with dwarfs, and giants, and a calf with two heads: what more could any country population need in the way of entertainment?

Into the lock-up, accordingly, they put poor Nonno and his grandchildren, and shut and locked the door upon them.

It was now evening-time: there was clean straw in the place, and a mug of water and some bread. Nonno and Bindo abandoned themselves to the uttermost hopelessness of despair, and laid themselves face downward on the straw, sobbing their very hearts out. Gemma was dry-eyed, her forehead was crimson, her teeth were set; she was consumed with rage, that burnt up alike her terror and her pain. Oh, why did not a handful of Neapolitan sailors sail over the water, and land, and kill all these English? It was four years since she had seen Naples, but she remembered,—oh, how she remembered! And they had come all the way out of their own sunshine only to be locked up in a trap like rats! Furious thoughts of setting fire to this prison-house beset her; she had matches in her pocket, but it would be hard to set it on fire without consuming themselves with it, since the doors were fast locked. What could she do? what could she do?

"Why do they take us? We have done no harm," she said, through her shut teeth.

"*Carina mia,*" sighed her grandfather, shivering where he lay on the straw, "I am afraid before the law we are no better than the owls and the wood-rats are; we are only vagabonds; we have no dwelling and we have no trade."

"We pay for our lodging, and we pay for our bread!"

"Perhaps they do not believe that. Always have I been so afraid this would happen, and now it has come at last."

The poor old man sank back on the straw again, and began to sob piteously. Why had he left the merry crowds of the Strada del Male, where there was always a laugh and a song, and a slice of melon or of *pasta?*

At last both he and Bindo sobbed themselves into sleep, but no sleep came to Gemma; she was wide awake, panting, hot, all alive with fury, all the night.

With morning they were all taken before the magistrates, who were sitting that day. There were a great many gentlemen and officials, but among them all Gemma only saw one, the horseman whose ears she had boxed in the lane. For Philip Carey was on the bench that day, and recognized, with not much pleasure, the little group of Italian strollers. They all three looked miserable, jaded, and very dusty. The night passed in the lock-up had taken all their look of sunshiny merriment away; the straw had caught on their poor garments; the faces of Nonno and the little boy were swollen and disfigured with crying; only Gemma, all dishevelled and dusty and feverish, had a pride and ferocity about her that gave her strength and kept her beauty.

As she was the only one who could talk any English, she was ordered to speak for the others; but when she said her grandfather's name was Epifania Santo, there was a laughter in the court, which incensed her so bitterly that she flung back her curls out of her eyes

and said, "If you do not believe what I say, why do you want me to speak?"

Then being once started she went on before any of the magistrates or officials could stop her: "You have taken us up; why have you taken us up? we have done nobody any sort of harm. We only dance, and Nonno tells fortunes, and does the tricks, and you have taken his box away, and do you call that honest to a poor man? We do not rob, we do not kill, we do not hurt; when Bindo takes an apple I am angry." And then her English, which was apt to go away from her in moments of excitement, failed her utterly, and she poured out a torrent of Neapolitan patois which not a soul there present understood, only from her flashing eyes and her expressive gestures it was easy to guess that it meant vehement invective and reproach.

Mr. Carey looked at her attentively, but he said nothing; his brother magistrates, when she had been peremptorily ordered to be still and listen, put a few sharp questions to her and examined the witnesses, who were policemen and country-people, and who all deposed to the fact that the old Italian did tricks and told fortunes and got them to put their pence down by fair promises, and had moreover dice and cards whereby he induced them to lose money. The children only danced; they had no habitation; they were always wandering about; by their papers they were natives of Naples. Then the constable whose arm Gemma had bitten appeared with it in a sling, and stated what she had done to him, and this terrible piece of violence prejudiced the whole court greatly against her.

Mr. Carey smiled once; he took no share in the

examination. But Gemma was always looking at him; she was always thinking, "This is all his doing because I struck him: he has had us all put in prison because I offended him."

She hated him,—oh, how she hated him! If she had not been so watched and warded by the constables, she would have leaped across the court and done the same thing again. For she did not mind anything for herself; but if they put Nonno and Bindo back in prison, and parted them from her,—she knew people were parted in prison and boys and girls were never together there, nor ever the old left with the young. And she knew too that in England there were prisons called workhouses, where they packed away all the people who were poor. Her heart stood still with fright, and all she saw in the dusky court was the grave face of Philip Carey, which seemed to her like the stony face of Fate.

"Ah, *bimba mia*," sobbed her grandfather in a whisper, "yonder is the gentleman you struck as he rode on his horse. You have been our undoing with your fiery temper: always was I afraid that you would be!"

Under that reproof Gemma's head drooped and all the color fled out of her cheeks. She knew that it was a just one.

Bindo, meanwhile, was clinging to her skirts and whimpering like a poor little beaten puppy, till she thought her very brain would go mad, whirling round and round in such misery.

The magistrates spoke together, Mr. Carey alone saying little: there was a strong feeling against all

strollers at that time in the county, on account of many robberies that had been committed on outlying farms by tramps and gypsies in the last few years, and many raids that had been made on poultry-houses, apple-lofts, and sheep-folds. Epifania Santo and his grandchildren only seemed to the bench idle, useless, and not harmless vagrants, no better than the wood-rats, as old Nonno had said; whilst the fierce onslaught on the constable of which Gemma had been guilty gave their misdeeds a darker color in the eyes of the Devon gentlemen.

After some consultation and some disagreement among the magistrates, the old man, having no visible means of subsistence, was condemned to a month's imprisonment for unlawfully gambling and deceiving the public, whilst Bindo and Gemma were respectively ordered to be consigned to reformatories. In consideration of Epifania Santo's age, and of his being a foreigner, he was spared hard labor. When Gemma comprehended the sentence, and the old man had been made to understand it also, such a scene of grief and of despair ensued as no English court had ever beheld. To the slow and stolid folk of the banks of Dart it seemed as if madness had descended straight upon these strangers. Their passionate paroxysms of woe had no limit, and no likeness to anything ever seen in Devon before.

Gemma had to be torn by main force from her brother and grandfather, and, writhing in the hands of the constables as an otter writhes on a spear, she shook her little clinched fists at the bench, and, seeing there only the face of Philip Carey, who to her belief

was sole author of all her sorrows and ills, she cried to him, "I struck you yesterday, I will hurt you more before many days are over. You are a wicked, wicked, wicked man!"

Then the policeman seized her more roughly, and put his hand over her mouth, and carried her away by sheer force.

"Did that little jade really strike you a blow, Carey?" asked one of his fellow-magistrates, in surprise.

Mr. Carey smiled a little. "Oh, yes," he said, quietly. "But I had deserved it."

"I wonder you wanted us to be more lenient, then."

"One cannot be revenged on a child," he answered, "and they are children of the sun; they have hotter passions than ours, and quicker oblivion. It would have been better to have given them a little money and shipped them back to Naples. But you outnumbered me. The old man is inoffensive, I think. After all, a penny was not much for a yokel to pay to be blessed by the promise of a coach-and-six."

But his fellow-magistrates did not see the matter in this light, and thought the old stroller well out of mischief in the jail of Dartmouth. Philip Carey two days before would have thought so with them, for he had the reputation of being severe on the bench; but the sunny, dusky, ardent face of Gemma had touched him, and the love of the three for each other seemed enviable to him. He had been all alone since his early boyhood, and such affection as theirs seemed to him a beautiful and priceless treasure. It was cruel, he thought, to tear it asunder, as cruel

as to pluck all to pieces a red rose just flowered to the light.

He rode home that evening in the twilight, somewhat saddened, and doubtful whether the law was as just and unerring a thing as he had always until then believed it.

The night saw poor old Nonno put in prison as if he were a thief, and saw the children severed and taken respectively to the boys' and the girls' asylum in a reformatory for naughty children, which some good people with the best intentions had built and endowed in the neighborhood. They had so clung together, and so madly resisted being parted, that they had fairly frightened the men and women in charge of them. They had never been away from each other an hour in their lives ever since little Bindo had been born one summer day in the cabin by the Mediterranean and laid in the half of a great gourd as a cradle for his sister's wondering eyes to admire. But severed now they were, and whilst poor Bindo in the boys' ward was subjected to such a scrubbing as he had never had in all his days, and his abundant auburn curls were cut short, Gemma—whose paroxysms of passion had given place to a stolid and strange quietude—was also bathed, and clothed in the clothes of the reformatory, whilst her many-colored sash, her picturesque petticoats, and her coral ear-rings and necklace were all taken away, fumigated, rolled up in a bundle, and ticketed with a number. She submitted, but her great eyes glared and glowed strangely, and she was perfectly mute. Not a single sound could those set in command over her force from her lips.

The superiors were used to stubborn children, savage children, timid children, vicious children; but this silence of hers, following on her delirium of fury and grief, was new and startling to them.

She looked very odd, clad perforce in some straightly-cut stiff gray clothes, and when she was set down, one of a long row, to have supper off oatmeal porridge, the handsome, pale, desperate little face of hers, with burning eyes and an arched red mouth, looked amidst the faces of the other little girls like a carnation among cabbage-stalks. Not a morsel would she eat; not a word would she speak; at no one would she even look.

"Oh, Nonno! oh, Bindo!" her heart kept crying, till it seemed as if it would burst, but never a sound escaped her.

Poor little Bindo, meanwhile, was sobbing every minute, but he ate his porridge, though he watered it with floods of tears, where he was set among a score of gray-clad, crop-headed English boys, who were gaping and grinning at him.

With the close of evening Bindo was stowed away in the boys' dormitory, and Gemma was led to one of a number of narrow little iron beds with blue counterpanes. She was undressed and bidden to lie down, which she did. Her bed was the last of the row, and next to the wall: she turned her face to the wall and they thought her resigned. Soon the light was put out, and the little sleepers were in the land of dreams.

But Gemma never closed her eyes. Her heart seemed to be beating all over her body. She stuffed the sheet into her mouth, and bit it hard to keep in the

cries of agony that sprang to her lips. Would she ever see Nonno again? Bindo she might, perhaps, but Nonno,—she was sure he would die in prison.

There was a window in the wall near the bed; it was unshuttered. She could see the gray of the evening change to the dark of the night, and then the moon came out,—the harvest-moon, as they called it here. She was only waiting for every one to be asleep to get up and look out of that window and see whether it would let her escape. An under-matron slept in the dormitory, but at the farther end, where everything was quite hushed, and when the slow breathing of the children told that they were all sleeping soundly, Gemma got up in her bed and sat erect. Finding all was still, she put one foot out of bed, and then another, and very softly stole to the window. It was a lattice window, and left a little open, for the night was warm. A sweet smell of moist fields, of growing grass, of honeysuckle hedges, came up on the night air. Gemma noiselessly opened the window a little farther and looked out: it was far, far down to the ground below: still, she thought it was possible for her to escape. She stole back to the bedside, put on the hideous, ungainly cotton clothes as well as she could in the dark, and knotted the skirt of the frock tight round her limbs so as to leave them untrammelled. If no one awoke, she could get away, she reflected; for her quick eyes had seen a rain-pipe that passed from the casement to the ground.

She paused a few moments, making sure, quite sure, that every one in the long dormitory was asleep. As she stood, she saw some hundred matches lying by a

lamp, of which the light was put out, on a little table near. A cruel joy danced into her eyes: she stretched out her hand and took the matches and slipped them in the bosom of her frock. Then, with the courage of desperation, she climbed to the window-seat, put half her body out of it, and, clinging to the iron pipe with both hands, let herself slide down, down, down, to where she knew not. All was dark beneath her.

But if she slid into the sea that would be better, she said to herself, than to live on imprisoned.

As it happened, the window was twenty feet and more from the earth, but the turf was beneath, and the rain-pipe was so made that she could easily clasp it with feet and hands and glide down it, only grazing all the skin off her palms, and bruising her knees and her chest. No one heard her, there was no alarm given; she reached the ground in safety as a village clock tolled ten.

She dropped all in a heap, and lay still, half stunned, for some moments; soon she got her breath and her wits again, and rose up on her feet and looked about her. She knew all the country-side well, having been here ever since the apple-orchards had been in blossom, and, when they had not been performing, having scampered hither and thither with Bindo, begging honey or eggs at the cottages, or coaxing the boatmen to let them drift down the river.

The moon was now very bright, and she saw that she stood near the Dart water, and she could discover here a steeple, there a gable, yonder a windmill, and so forth, by which she could tell where she was. She had

SHE ONLY RAN ON, STUMBLING OFTEN, AND FEELING FOR THE MATCHES IN THE BOSOM OF HER UGLY GRAY COTTON FROCK

been brought in a covered van to the reformatory, and had only known that it was near Dartmouth.

The grass on which she stood grew under a low wall, and beyond the wall was a towing-path, and beyond that the river. The towing-path she knew well: she and Bindo had often ridden on the backs of the towing-horses or got a seat in the big barges by just singing their little songs and twanging their tambourines.

The towing-path served her purpose well. She looked back at the big pile behind her, a white, square, grim-looking place; Bindo was sleeping under its roof; then she hardened her heart, vaulted over the river-wall, and began to run down the river-path.

She did not hesitate, for she had a very wicked resolve in her soul, and her goal was four miles away, she knew, as a water-mill on the other bank among willows was an old friend of hers, and told her her whereabouts. Not a sound came from the house behind her; not a creature had awakened, or the alarm-bell would have been clanging and lights appearing at every window. She was quite safe thus far, and she began to run along the dewy grassy path where the glowworms were twinkling at every step under the ferns and the dock leaves.

"The wicked, wicked man!" she kept saying in her teeth.

She never saw the pretty glowworms she was so fond of at other times, or heard the nightingales singing in the woods, for when a sin is in the soul it makes the eyes blind and the ears deaf. She only ran on, stumbling often and feeling for the matches in the bosom of her ugly gray cotton frock. The frock was

irksome to her: she longed for her own short skirts and pliable bodice, and she missed the scarf about her loins, and the necklace at her throat. But she ran on and on, having a set purpose and a great crime in her mind.

She knew that if she only followed the towing-path long enough she would come to the place called Carey's Honor.

She knew it well: she had often looked over its white gates and envied the calves and the lambs in its pastures, and wondered what the rooms were like within beyond the rose-hung windows, and sighed for the nectarines and the cherries that grew in its green old garden-ways. It might be farther or nearer than she fancied; that she could not be sure about; but she knew that if she went on long enough along the Dart water she would come to it. She did not feel at all frightened at being out all alone so late; after the excitement and despair of the day she seemed to have no feeling left except this one burning, consuming, terrible longing for vengeance, which made her feet fly over the towing-path to the peaceful Elizabethan house lying among its yews and limes and stacks and hives and byres in the moonlight.

She had been running and walking an hour and a half or more, when a bend in the water showed her the twisted chimney-stacks and the black-and-white wood-work and the honeysuckle-covered porches of the homestead, with the moon shining above it and the green uplands sloping behind. Then Gemma, whose young soul was now so full of wickedness that there was not a spot of light left in it, climbed over

the white wooden gate and crept up over the wide grass-lands where the cattle were asleep and the big ox-eye daisies were shut up at rest. The air was full of the sweet smell of the dog-rose, of the honeysuckle, of the sweet brier, and away across the meadows the black-and-white timbers and the deep gables of the old house were distinct in the moon-rays.

She crossed the pastures and opened a little wicket that was never latched, and got into the gardens, where the stocks and picotees and gilly-flowers and moss roses and sweet williams and all other dear old-fashioned blossoms were filling the night with their fragrance. But Gemma had no thought for them. She crept on up to the house, and saw that in one part the thatched roof came down so low to the ground that, standing on a stone bench which was beneath, she would be able to touch it. She sprang on to the bench, drew her matches out of her bosom, struck light to them, and was about to thrust the blazing bunch into the thatch, when a huge dog bounded out of the shadow, leaped on her, and knocked her head downwards off the stone seat on to the grass: he would have torn her to pieces, only he was such a great and good creature that, seeing she was a child, he was merciful in his strength.

"Monarch, what is it, my lad?" said Philip Carey, as he came out from the open door of the porch, alarmed at the noise of the fall.

The Newfoundland left her and went to his master, and Mr. Carey saw the form of Gemma lying prone upon his gravel and the bundle of blazing matches still clutched in her clinched hand.

"Good heavens! the child came to burn my house

down!" he cried, half aloud, as he stooped over her and lifted her up: she had fallen on the back of her head and was stunned into insensibility for the moment. He wrenched the burning matches out of her tightly-closed fingers and stamped the fire out of them with his heel. That was soon done, and when the dangerous things were mere harmless splinters of wood he lifted the insensible form of the child up in his arms and carried her into his house.

"She has escaped from the reformatory," he thought, as he saw the ugly gray cotton gown and the blue apron that was tacked on to it.

He laid her gently on a couch, and called his housekeeper, a white-haired, kindly old woman, with cheeks like the apples that crowded his orchards in October.

"Monarch knocked this little girl down, and she is senseless with the fall. Will you do your best for her, Mary? She is one of the Home children," he said to the old dame, and he did not add a word about the matches.

The housekeeper's simple remedies soon recalled Gemma back to her senses, and she opened her great, frightened, humid eyes to the light of the lamp-lit room.

"*I zolfini, I zolfini!*" she murmured, thinking of her matches and vaguely fancying that she was in the midst of flames. All her English had gone clean away from her.

"It is that foreign child, master," said the housekeeper,—"the one that has been roaming the country ever since Candlemas; I caught her little brother at the hen-house at Easter-time, and spanked him. They

were both of them sentenced, weren't they, in town this morning, and the old grandfather too?"

"Yes," said Mr. Carey, curtly, "she has run away, that is evident. Suppose you go and get some little room ready for her, for she will not be able to go back to-night. She is all right now, I fancy, though she is not yet fairly awake."

"One of the attics, master? Shall she sleep with Hannah?—not as Hannah will stomach it, a little waif and stray out of prison——"

"No, no; get her a nice little room ready anywhere you like, but one that is comfortable. She is a very forlorn little maid: we must be good to her, Mary."

"Her little brother was at the hen-house, and I spanked him——"

"She is not her brother," said Philip Carey, impatiently. "Leave me with her a little."

Though her master was very gentle, the housekeeper knew that he chose to be obeyed, and she trotted off up the broad oak staircase obediently.

Philip Carey remained beside Gemma; and the big black dog also sat looking at her, with his head held critically on one side, for he had not made up his mind about her.

"You came to burn my house down?" said Mr. Carey, gravely, as he looked full into her face.

She understood what he said, but she did not answer. Her mind was still confused; she remembered what she had come to do, and she began to understand that she had failed to do it and was in the power of this man whom she hated.

"I caught you in the act," he continued, sternly,

"and if my dog had not thrown you down you would probably have succeeded, for old thatch burns like tinder. Now, will you tell me why you wished to do me so great an injury?"

Gemma was still mute; her brows were drawn together, her eyes underneath them were flashing and sombre; she had raised herself on one arm on the cushions of the couch, and gazed at him in silence.

"Perhaps you do not know," said Mr. Carey, "that the crime of arson, the crime you tried to commit, is one punished by only less severity than is shown to murder. Very often it becomes murder too, when people are burned, as they often are, in the house that is fired. For the mere attempt I can have you imprisoned for many years. Now tell me, I order you to tell me instantly, why you desired to injure me so hideously?"

Gemma followed his words and gathered their meaning, and felt forced to obey. But all the passion of hate and of pain in her surged up in broken utterances, for the foreign language was ill able to convey all the vehemence of emotion and of indignation raging in her heart.

"I came—I came—I came," she muttered, "I came to burn your house: yes; why not? I told you in the morning I would do something worse to you. I did strike you, but you had deserved it. You had said I was immodest; and then because you were angry you had us all taken up by the police, and you put dear Nonno in prison as if he were a thief, when he is so honest that he scolds Bindo if Bindo takes an apple, and you have parted me and Bindo, and shut us in a

horrible place, and they have cut our hair and washed us, and I saw I could get away to-night, and I did, and I dropped through the window; and the matches were there, and I said to myself I would burn your house down; I had heard people say that you were fond of your house, and if you say that it was wicked of me, it has been you who have been wicked first. You are a bad, vile, cruel man to shut dear Nonno into your prisons, and he nearly *ottant' uno* years old, and so good and so kind and so merry; and never will we see him again, and sooner than go back to that place which you put me in, I will drown myself in your river there, or make your dog tear me to pieces——"

Then the poor little soul burst into a rain of tears enough to have extinguished a million lighted lucifer matches or the very fires of a burning house had there been one.

Philip Carey allowed the tempest of grief to exhaust itself; then he said to her, in a grave and very sweet voice, yet a little sternly,—

"My poor little girl, you were ready to take a great crime on your little white soul to-night; and who knows where its evil might have stopped? Fire is not a plaything. Now, I want you to listen to what I have to say about myself. I am a magistrate, and I was on the bench to-day, it is true. But I did not approve of the sentence passed on you by men of greater age and weight in the county than I am, and I tried my best, vainly, to have it mitigated. I had nothing whatever to do with your grandfather's arrest. What he did, harmless though it seems, was yet against the law; and the mayor of the town chose to enforce the law against

him. More than this, my dear, not only would I not, had I been alone, have sentenced your grandfather in so severe a manner, but I would have aided you all to return to your own country. As it is, I mean to-morrow to use what influence I possess to endeavor to obtain a remission of your grandfather's sentence, and I meant also to go across to Portsmouth and see the Italian consul there, to ascertain whether or not he could not help you to go back to Naples if I could succeed in getting your punishments remitted, as I hoped to do."

He paused, and Gemma gazed at him with dilated eyes and a hot color on her cheeks. She was silent and ashamed.

"Now you have spoiled it all," continued Mr. Carey: "how can I beg for a little incendiary to be let loose on the world? And my gardener will see those lucifer matches in the morning, and every one will know or guess then what you came to do, and why my dog Monarch sprang on you."

The color went out of her face, and her lips quivered.

"But it was only *me*," she said, piteously. "Nonno would not have tried to fire your house, nor Bindo. It was only me. Could you not punish me all by myself and let them out? If you will only let them out, I will go back to prison, and I will not run away again: I will bear it all my life if I must, if you will only let out Nonno and Bindo!"

"My dear," answered Philip Carey, "I have no power: I cannot deal you out life and death, as you seem to think. You are a dangerous and fierce little tigress, of that there is no doubt; but I do not think

the reformatory, good as it is, would improve you much. Suppose we make a bargain: if you will promise me to try and be good, I will promise you to try and liberate you all three, and send you all back in a good ship to your own country."

With as much rapidity as she had sprung up on his saddle to box his ears, Gemma sprang off the couch, and, to his great amazement, threw her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Oh, you are good!" she murmured, rapturously. "I love you, I love you, I love you as much as I hated you yesterday!"

And she was so pretty that Philip Carey could not be angry with her any more.

She slept soundly that night under the roof she had tried to burn, and in the morning had the most tempting breakfast brought to her on her little bed that she had ever imagined in all her life, and Monarch came and put his big muzzle down on the snowy counterpane, and made friends with her over honey and muffins and cream.

Mr. Carey kept his promise, and, by means of continuous efforts for some ten days, succeeded in getting the release of poor old Epifania Santo and of Bindo, and obtaining also for them a free passage by a sailing-ship then loading in Devonport and bound to go down Channel to the south coast of Italy with a cargo of iron and steel.

During this time that he was thus returning good for evil and exerting himself in her cause, Gemma remained under the care of his housekeeper, and saw him very often in each day, and had a simple, pretty, white linen

frock made for her, and spent all her time in the gardens and orchards and meadows with Monarch and the other dogs of the house.

When Philip Carey at last announced to her that all was arranged for their departure by the sailing-vessel, and that she would meet her brother and grandfather at the docks, he was surprised to see a cloud sweep over her mobile face, and great tears fill her eyes once more.

"Cannot we stay? cannot we stay?" she said, with a sob. "Grandfather is so afraid of the sea, and Bindo will be so sorry to leave before the apples are ripe, and me,—I cannot bear to leave *you!*"

"Do you like me a little, then?" said Mr. Carey, astonished and touched.

"Oh, so much!" said Gemma, with a great sigh. "You have been so kind, and I have been so wicked."

He hesitated a moment, much surprised, then answered,—

"Well, it might perhaps be arranged. Your grandfather is very old for a voyage, and there is a little cottage down beyond my orchards that he might have; but, Gemma, if I let you stay on my land, you must promise me to be very reasonable and obedient, and to learn all you are told to learn, and never to give way to your furious passions."

"Oh, I will be so good!" she cried, in ecstasy, as she sprang up in his arms and kissed him again. "I will be so good! and when I am with you I forget that we never really see the sun, and Bindo says he is sure that your apples are better than our grapes and figs and oranges at home."

"It is well you should think so, if you are to live all your lives amidst the apples," said Philip Carey, with a smile.

So they stayed there; and a few years later, when Gemma had grown a most beautiful young girl, and become wise and gentle as well, though she still kept her April face that was all sunshine and storm in the same moment, Philip Carey made her his wife and Monarch's mistress; and she is still always ready to declare that apples are the best and sweetest fruit that grows. For, you see, Love gathers them for her.

THE LITTLE EARL

THE LITTLE EARL

THE little Earl was a very little one indeed, as far as years and stature were, but he was a very big one if you consider his possessions and his importance. He was only a month old when his father died, and only six months old when his mother, too, left him for the cold damp vault, with its marbles and its rows of velvet coffins,—a vault that was very grand, but so chilly and so desolate that when they took the little Earl there on holy-days to lay his flowers down upon the dead he could never sleep for nights afterwards, remembering its darkness and solemnity.

The little Earl was called Hubert Hugh Lupus Alured Beaudesert, and was the Earl of Avillion and Lantrissaint; but by his own friends and his grandmother and his old nurse he was called only Bertie.

He was eight years old in the summer-time, when there befell him the adventure I am going now to relate to you, and he was, for his age, quite a baby; he was slender and slight, and he had a sweet little face like a flower, with very big eyes, and a quantity of fair hair cut after the fashion of the Reynolds and Gainsborough children. He had always been kept as if he were a china doll that would break at a touch. His

grandmother and his uncle had been left the sole charge of him; and as they were both invalids, and the latter a priest, and both dwelt in great retirement at the castle of Avillion, the little Earl's little life had not been a boy's life.

He had always been tranquil, for every one loved him, and he had all things that he wished for; yet he was treated more as if he were a rare flower or a most fragile piece of porcelain, than a little bright boy of real flesh and blood; and, without knowing it, he was often tired of all his cotton-wool. He was such a tiny fellow, you see, to be the head of his race, and the last of it too; for there were no others of this great race from which he had sprung, and his uncle, as a priest, could never marry. Thus so much depended on this small short life that the fuss made over him, and the care taken of him, had ended in making him so incapable of taking any care of himself that if he had ever got out alone in a street he would have been run over to a certainty, and as he grew older he grew sad and feverish, and chafed because he was never allowed to do the things that all boys by instinct love to do. By nature the little Earl was very brave, but he was made timid by incessant cautions; and as he was, too, by nature very thoughtful, the seclusion from other children in which he was brought up made him too serious for his age.

Avillion was deep-bosomed in woods, throned high above a lake and moors and mountains, and setting its vast stone buttresses firmly down into the greenest, smoothest turf in all the green west country of England; a grand and glorious place, famous in history,

full of majesty and magnificence, and sung to, forever, by the deep music of the Atlantic waves. Once upon a time the Arthurian Court that Mr. Tennyson has told you of so often had held its solemn jousts and its blameless revels there; at least, so said the story of Avillion, as told in ballads of the country-side,—more trustworthy historians than most people think.

All those ballads the little Earl knew by heart, and he loved them more than anything, for Deborah, his nurse, had crooned them over his cradle before ever he could understand even the words of them; so that Arthur and Launcelot, and Sir Gawain and Sir Galahad, and all the knightly lives that were once at Tintagel, were more real to him than the living figures about him, and these fancies served him as his playmates,—for he had few others, except his dog Ralph and his pony Royal. His relatives were ailing, melancholy, attached to silence and solitude, and though they would have melted gold and pearls for Bertie's drinking if he could have drunk them, never bethought themselves that noise and romps and laughter and fun and a little spice of peril are all things without which a child's life is as dead and spiritless as a squirrel's in a cage. And Bertie did not know it either. He studied under his tutor, Father Philip, a noble and learned old man, and he was caressed and cosseted by his nurse Deborah, and he wore beautiful little dresses, most usually of velvet and he had wonderful toys that were sent from Paris, automatons that danced and fenced and played the guitar, and animals that did just what live animals do, and Punches and puppets that played and mimicked by clock-work, and little yachts that sailed by clock-work

and whole armies of soldiers, and marvellous games costly and splendid; but he had nobody to play at all these things with, and it was dull work playing with them by himself. Deborah played with them in the best way she knew, but she was not a child, being sixty-six years old, and was of a slow imagination and of rheumatic movements.

"Run and play," Father Philip would often say to him, taking him perforce from his books; but the little Earl would answer, sadly, "I have nobody to play with!"

That want of his attracted no attention from all those people who loved the ground his little feet trod on; he was surrounded with every splendor and indulgence, he had half the toys of the Palais Royal in his nursery, and he had a bed to sleep in of ivory inlaid with silver, that had once belonged to the little King of Rome; millions of money were being stored up for him, and lands wide enough to make a principality called him lord: it never occurred to anybody that the little Earl of Avillion was not the most fortunate child that lived under the sun.

"Why do people all call me 'my lord'?" he asked one day, suddenly becoming observant of this fact.

"Because you are my lord," said Deborah,—which did not content him.

He asked Father Philip.

"My dear little boy, it is your title: think not of it save as an obligation to bear your rank well and without stain."

At last the little Earl grew so pale and thin and so delicate in health that the physician who was always

watching over him said to his grandmother that the boy wanted change of air, and advised the southern coast for him, and cessation of almost all study; which order grieved Father Philip sorely, for Bertie could read his Livy well, and was beginning to spell through his Xenophon, and it cut the learned gentleman to the heart that his pupil should give up all this and go back on the royal road to learning. For both he and his uncle were resolved that the little Earl should be very learned, and the boy was eager enough to learn, only he liked still better knowing how the flowers grew, and why the birds could fly while he could not, and how the wood-bee made his neat house in the tree-trunk, and the beaver built his dam across the river,—inquiries which everybody about him was inclined to discourage. Natural science was not looked on with favor in the nursery and school-room of Avillion. It was considered to lead people astray.

So the little Earl was moved southward, with his grandmother, and his nurse, and his physician, and Ralph and Royal,—for he would not go without them, —and several servants as well. They were to go to Shanklin in the Isle of Wight, and they made the journey by sea in the beautiful sailing-yacht which was waiting for Bertie's manhood, after having been the idol of his father's. On board, the little Earl was well amused; but he worried every one about him by questions as to the fishes.

"Lord, child! they are but nasty clammy things, only nice when they are cooked," said his nurse; and his grandmamma said to him, "Dear, they were made to live in the sea, just as the birds are made to fly in

the air." And this did not satisfy the little man at all; but he could get no more information, for the doctor, who could have told him a good deal, was under the thumb of his stately mistress, and Lady Avillion had said very sternly that the boy was not to be encouraged in his nonsense: what he must be taught were the duties of his position and all he owed to the country,—the poor little Earl!

He was a very small, slender, pale-cheeked lord indeed, with his golden hair hanging over his puzzled forehead, that used to ache sometimes with carrying Xenophon and Livy, and underneath the hair two great wondering blue eyes, of a blue so dark that they were like wet violets. His hands were tiny and thin, and his legs, clad in their red-silk stockings and black-velvet breeches, were like two sticks: people who saw him go by whispered about him and said all the poor little fellow's rank and riches would not keep him long in the land of the living. Once the little Earl heard that said, and understood what it meant, and thought to himself, "I shouldn't mind dying if I could take Ralph: perhaps there would be somebody to play with there."

It was May, and there were not many folks at Shanklin: still, there were two or three children he might have played with, but his grandmamma thought them vulgar children, not fit playmates for him; and so the poor little Earl, with the burden of his greatness, had to walk soberly and sadly past them, with his little tired red-stockinged legs, while the little girls said to each other, in a whisper, "There's a little lord!" and the boys hallooed out, "He's the swell that owns

the schooner." Bertie would sigh, as he heard: what was the use of owning the schooner, when you had no one to play with on it, and never could do what you liked?

You have never seen Shanklin, for you have never been in England; and if you do go now, you will never see it as it was when Bertie walked there, when it was the prettiest and most primitive little place in England; now, they tell me, it has been made into a watering-place, with a pier and an esplanade.

Shanklin used to be a little green mossy village covered up in honeysuckle and hawthorn; low long houses, green too with ivy and creepers, hid themselves away in sweet-smelling old-fashioned gardens; yellow roads ran between high banks and hedges out to the green down or downward to the ripple of the sea; and the cool brown sands, glistening and firm, twice a day felt the kiss of the tide. The cliffs were brown too, for the most part; some were white; the gray sea stretched in front; and the glory of the place was its leafy chine and ravine that severed the rocks and was full of foliage and of the sound of birds. It used to be all so quiet there; now and then there passed in the offing a brig or a yacht or a man-of-war; now and then farmers' carts came in from the downs by Appuldurcombe or the farms beyond the Undercliff; there were some fishing-cabins by the beach, and one old inn with a long grassy garden, where the coaches used to stop that ran through the quiet country from Ryde to Ventnor. It was so green, so still, so friendly, so fresh; when I think of it I hear the swish of its lazy waves, and I smell the smell of its eglantine hedges.

and I see the big brown eyes of my gallant dog as he came breathless up from the sea.

Alas! you will never see it so. The hedges are down, they tell me, and the grand dog is dead, and the hateful engine tears through the fields, and the sands are beaten to make an esplanade, and the beach is noisy and hideous with the bray of bands and the laughter of fools.

What will the world be like when you are twenty? Very frightful, I fear. This is progress, they say?

But what of the little Earl? you ask.

Well, the little Earl knew Shanklin as I knew it,—when the blackbirds and thrushes sang in the quiet chine, and the sense of an infinite peace dwelt on its simple shores. His grandmamma had taken for the summer the house that stands in its woods at the head of the chine and looks straight down that rift of greenery to the gray sea. I know not what that house is now; then it was charming, chalet-like, yet spacious.

Here the little Earl was set free of his studies and kept out in the air when it was fine, and when it rained was sent, not to his books, but to his toys. Yet it did not seem to him any great change; for when he rode, James was with him; and when he walked, Deborah was with him; and when he bathed, William was with him; and when he was only in the garden, there was grandmamma.

He was never alone. Oh, how he longed to be alone sometimes! And he never had any playfellows: how he would watch those two or three vulgar little boys building sand-castles and sailing their boats! He

would have given all his big schooner and its crew to be one of those little boys.

He had a cruise now and then off the island, and the skipper came up bare-headed and hoped my lord enjoyed the sail; but he did not enjoy it. William and Deborah were always after him, telling him to mind this, and take care of that, till he wished his pretty snow-white sailor dress with the gold buttons were only rags and tatters! For the poor little Earl was an adventurous and curious little lad at heart, and had a spirit of his own, though he was so meek; and he was tired of being treated like a baby.

His eighth birthday came round in June, and wonderful and magnificent were the presents he had sent him; but he only felt a little more tired than he had done before; the bonbons he was not allowed to eat, the splendidly-bound books seemed nonsense to a little classic who read Livy; the toys he did not care for, and the gold dressing-case his grandmamma gave him was no pleasure: he had one in silver, and his very hair he was never permitted to brush himself.

"As I may not eat the bonbons, might I send them all to the children on the sands?" he asked wistfully of his grandmother.

"Impossible, my love," she answered. "We do not know who they are."

"May I give them to the poor children then?" said the little lad.

"That would hardly be wise, dear. It would give them a taste for luxuries."

Bertie sighed: life on this his eighth birthday seemed very empty.

"Why are people strangers to each other? Why does not everybody speak to every one else?" he said at last, desperately. "St. Paul says we are all brothers, and St. Francis——"

"My dear child, do not talk nonsense," said Lady Avillion. "We shall have you a Radical when you are of age!"

"What is that?" said Bertie.

"The people who slew your dear Charles the First were Radicals," said his grandmother, cleverly.

He was discouraged and silent. He went sorrowfully and leaned against one of the windows and looked down the green vista of the chine. It was raining, and they would not let him go out of doors. He thought to himself, "What use is it calling me 'my lord,' and telling me I own so much, and bowing down before me, if I may never do once, just once, as I like? I know I am a little boy; but then, if I am an Earl, if I am good enough to be *that*, I ought to be able to do once as I like. Else, if not, what is the use? And why does the skipper say always to me, 'Your lordship is owner here'?"

And then a fancy came into his little head. Was he like the Princes in the Tower? Was he a prisoner, after all? His little mind was full of the pageant of history, and he made his mind up now that he was a princely captive watched and warded.

"Tell me, dear Deb," he said, catching his nurse by the sleeve as she turned from his bed that night, "tell me, is it not true that I am in prison, though you are all so kind to me; that somebody else wants my throne?"

Nurse Deborah thought he was "off his head," and ran to the physician for a cooling draught, and sat up in fright all the night, not even reassured by his sound tranquil sleep.

Bertie asked her nothing more.

He was more sure than ever that a captive he was, kept in kindly and honorable durance, like James of Scotland in the Green Tower.

Whilst he was lying awake, a grand and startling idea dawned on him: What if he were to go out and see the world for himself? This notion has fascinated many a child before him. Did not St. Teresa of Spain, when she was a little thing, toddle out with a tiny brother over the brown sierras? So absolutely now did this enterprise dazzle and conquer the little Earl that before night was half-way over he had persuaded himself that a prisoner he *was*, and that his stolen kingdom he would go and find, just as the knights in his favorite tales sallied forth to seek the Holy Grail. The passion for adventure, for escape, for finding out the truth, grew so strong on him that at the first flush of daybreak he slid out of bed and resolved that go alone he would. He longed to take Ralph, but he feared it would not be right: who knew what perils or pains awaited him?—and to make the dog sharer in them seemed selfish. So he threw a glove of his own for Ralph to guard, bade him be still, and set about his own flight.

He made a sad bungle of dressing himself, for he had never clothed himself in his life; but at last he got the things on somehow, and most of them hind-part-before. But he did it all without awaking Deb

orah, and, taking his sailor-hat, he managed to drop out of the window on to the sward below without any one being aware.

It was quite early day; the sky was red, the shadows and the mists were still there, the birds were piping good-morrow to each other.

"How lovely it is!" he thought. "Oh, why doesn't everybody get up at sunrise?"

He knew, however, that if he wanted to see the world by himself he must not tarry there and think about the dawn. So off he set, as fast as his not very strong legs could carry him, and he got down to the shore.

The fog was on the sea and screened it from his sight, and there was no one on the beach except a boy getting nets ready in an old boat. To the boy ran Bertie, and held to him two half-crowns. "Will you row me to Bonchurch for that?" he asked.

The boy grinned. "For sure, little master; and I'd like to row a dozen at the price."

Into the boat jumped the little Earl, with all the feverish agility given to prisoners, who are escaping, by their freed instincts. It was a very old, dirty boat, and soiled his pretty white clothes terribly, but he had no eyes for that, he so enjoyed that delicious sense of being all alone and doing just as he liked. The boy was a big boy and strong, and rowed with a will; and the old tub went jumping and bobbing and splashing through the rather heavy swell. The gig of his yacht was a smart, long boat, beautifully clean, and with rowers all dressed in red caps and white jerseys; but the little Earl had never enjoyed rowing in *that* half

so much. There had been always somebody to look after him and say, "Don't lean over the side," or, "Mind the water does not splash you," or, "Take care!" Oh, that tiresome "Take care!" It makes a boy want to jump head-foremost into the sea, or fling himself head-downwards from the nearest apple-tree! I know you have felt so yourself twenty times a week, though I do not tell you that you were right.

Nothing is prettier than the Undercliff as you look up at it from the sea,—a tangle of myrtle and laurel and beech and birch coming down to the very shore, all as Nature made it. Bertie, as the boat wabbled along like a fat old duck, looked up at it and was enchanted, and then he looked at the white wall of mist on the waters, and was enchanted too. It was like Wonderland. His dreams were broken by the fisher-lad's voice:

"I'll have to put you ashore at the creek, little master, and get back, or daddy 'll give me a hiding."

"Who is 'daddy'?"

"Father," said the boy. "He'll lick me, for the tub's his'n."

Bertie was perplexed. He had heard of bears being licked into shape by their fathers and mothers, but this boy, though rough and rather shapeless, looked too old for such treatment.

"You were a wicked boy to use the boat, then," he said, with great severity.

The lad only grinned.

"Little master, you tipped me a crown."

"I did not mean to tempt you to do wrong," said Bertie, very seriously still; and then he colored, for

was he very sure that he was not doing wrong himself?

The old boat was grinding on the shingle then, and the rower of it was putting him ashore at a little creek that was wooded and pretty, and up which the sea ran at high tide; there was a little cottage at the head of it. I have heard that this wood-glen used to be in the old time a very famous place for smugglers, and it is still solitary and romantic, or at least was so still when the little Earl was set down there. "Where am I?" he asked the boy. But the wicked boy only grinned, and began to wabble back through the water as fast as his long slashing strokes could carry him. The little Earl felt rather foolish and rather helpless.

He was not far on his way towards seeing the world, and he began to wish for some breakfast. There was smoke going out of a chimney of the cottage, and the door of it stood open, but he was afraid the people there might stop him if he asked for anything, and, besides, the path up to it through the glen looked rocky and thorny and impassable, so he kept along by the beach, finding it heavy walking, for there were more stones than sands, and the beach was strewn with rocks, large and small, and stiff prickly furze. But he had the sea beside him and the world before him, and he walked on bravely, and in a little while he came into Bonchurch. It was very early yet, and Bonchurch was asleep, and most of its snug thatched houses, hidden away in their gardens and fuchsia hedges, were shut up snugly; the tall trees of its one street made a deep shadow in it, and the broad placid water of its great

pool was green with their reflection: it was a sweet, quiet place, leafy as any haunt for fairies, yet on the very edge of the sea.

At a baker's shop, a woman was lifting down the shutters. The little Earl took his hat off very prettily and said to her,—

"If you please, will you be kind enough to sell me some bread-and-milk?"

The woman stared, then laughed.

"Lord bless your pretty face! I only sell bread, but I'll give you some milk in, for sake of your pinched cheeks. Come along inside, little gentleman."

He went inside; it seemed a very funny place to him, so small and so dark, and so dusty with flour; but the smell of baking was sweet, and he was hungry.

She bustled about a little, and set before him a bowl of bread-and-milk, with a wooden spoon to eat it with. The little Earl put his hand in his pocket to pay for it; lo! he had not a farthing!

He turned very red, and then very white, and thought to himself that the money must have tumbled into the sea with his watch, which was missing too.

It did not occur to him that the wicked boy had taken both; yet such was the sad fact.

He rose, very sorrowful and confused and ashamed.

"Madam, I beg your pardon," he said, in his little ceremonious way: "I thought I had money, but I have lost it. Thank you very much, but I cannot take the food."

The woman was good-natured and shrewd.

"Lord! sup it up, my dear little gentleman," she said to him. "You are welcome to it,—right wel-

come, you are; and your pa and your ma can pay for it."

"No, no," murmured Bertie, getting very red; and, fearing lest his longing for the meal should overcome his honor, he stumbled out of the baking-house door and ran up the tree-shadowed road faster than ever he had run in his life.

To be sure, he had plenty of money of his own; they all said so; but he never knew well where it was, or what it meant; and, besides, he intended never to go back to his grandmother and Deborah and Ralph and Royal any more, till he had found out the truth and seen his kingdom.

So he ran on through Bonchurch and out of it, leaving its pleasant green shade with a little sigh, half of impatience, half of hunger. He did not go on by the sea, for he knew by hearsay that this way would take him to Ventnor, and he was afraid people in a town would know him and stop him; so he set forth inland, where the deep lanes delve through the grassy downs, and here, sitting on a stile, the little Earl saw the ploughboy eating something white and round and big that he himself had never seen before.

"It must be something very delicious to make him enjoy it so much," thought the little Earl, and then curiosity entered so into him, and he longed so much to taste this wonderful unknown thing, that he went up to the boy and said to him,—

"Will you be so kind as to let me know what you are eating?"

The ploughboy grinned from ear to ear.

"For certain, little zurr," he said, with a burr and

a drawl in his speech, and he gave the thing to Bertie, which was neither more nor less than a peeled turnip.

The little Earl looked at it doubtfully, for he did not much fancy what the other had handled with his big brown hands and bitten with his big yellow teeth. But then, to enjoy anything as much as that other had enjoyed it, and to taste something quite unknown!—this counterbalanced his disgust and overruled his delicacy. One side of the great white thing was unbitten; he took an eager tremulous little bite out of that.

"But, oh!" he cried in dismay as he tasted, "it has no taste at all, and what there is is nasty!"

"Turnips is main good," said the boy.

"Oh, *no!*" said the little Earl, with intense horror; and he threw the turnip down amongst the grass, and went away sorely puzzled.

"Little master," roared Hodge after him, "I'll bet as you aren't hungry."

That was it, of course.

The little Earl was not really hungry,—never had been really hungry in all his life. But this explanation of natural philosophy did not occur to him, not even when the boy hallooed it after him. He only said to himself, "How can that boy eat that filthy thing? and he really did look as if he liked it so!"

Presently, after trotting a mile or so, he passed a little shop set all by itself at the end of a lane,—surely the tiniest, loneliest shop in Great Britain. But a cheery-looking old woman kept it, and he saw it had bread in it, as well as many other stuffs, and tin canisters that were to him incomprehensible.

"If you please," he said, rather timidly, offering the gold anchor off the ribbon of his hat, "I have lost my money, and could you be so kind as to give me any breakfast for this?"

The old woman smelt the anchor, bit it, twinkled her eyes, and then drew a long face. "It ain't worth tuppence, master," she said; "but ye're mighty small to be out by yourself, and puny like: I don't say as how I won't feed yer."

"Thanks," said Bertie, who did not know at all what his anchor was worth.

"Come in out o' dust," said the old woman, smartly, and then she bustled about and set him down in her little den to milk, bread, and some cold bacon.

That he had no appetite was the despair of his people and physician at home, and cod-liver oil, steel, quinine, and all manner of nastiness had been administered to provoke hunger in him, with no effect: by this time, however, he had almost as much hunger as the boy who had munched the turnip.

Nothing had ever tasted to him half so good in his life.

The old woman eyed him curiously. "You's a runaway," she thought; "but I'll not raise the cry after ye, or they'll come spying about this bit o' gold."

She said to herself that the child would come to no harm, and when a while had gone by she would step over to Ryde or Newport and get a guinea on the brooch.

Her little general shop was not a very prosperous business, though useful to the field-folk; and sanding

her sugar, and putting clay in her mustard, and adding melted fat to her butter, had not strengthened her moral principles.

As Bertie was eating, there came a very thin, scantily-clad, miserable-looking woman, who held out a half-penny. "A sup o' milk for Susy, missus," she said, in a very pitiful faint voice.

"How be Sue?" asked the mistress of the shop. The woman shook her head with tears running down her hollow cheeks.

"My boy he's gone in spinney," she murmured, "to try and catch summat, if he can: will you change it, missus, if he git a good bird?"

The old woman winked, frowned, and glanced at Bertie.

"Birds aren't good eatin' on fust of July," she observed, as she handed the milk. The woman paid the halfpenny and hurried away with the milk.

"I think that woman is very poor," said Bertie, questioningly and solemnly.

The old dame chuckled.

"No doubts o' that, master."

"Then you are cruel to take her money: you should have *given* her the milk."

"Ho, ho, little sir! be you a parson in a gownd? I'm mappen poor as she, and *she* hiv desarved all she gits, for her man he were a poacher, and he died in jail last Jannivery."

"A poacher!" said Bertie, with the natural instinctive horror of a landed gentleman. "And her son was going to snare a bird!" he cried, with light breaking in on him; "and you would give them things

in exchange for the bird! Oh, what a very cruel, what a very *wicked* woman you are!"

For an answer she shied at him a round wooden trencher, which missed its aim and struck a basket of eggs and smashed them, and one of the panes of her shop-window as well.

Bertie got up and walked slowly out of the door, keeping his eyes upon her.

"When I see a magistrate, I shall tell him about you," he said, solemnly: "you tempt poor people: that is very dreadful."

The enraged woman, in her outraged feelings, threw a pail of dirty water after him, some of which splashed him and completed the disfigurement of his white suit. He looked up and down to see for the poor woman with the milk, that he might console her poverty and open her eyes to her sins; but she was not within sight; and Bertie reflected that if he stopped to correct other people's errors he should never see the world and find his kingdom.

He had eaten a hearty meal, and his spirits rose and his heart was full of hope and valor; and if he had only had Ralph with him, he would have been quite happy.

So he went away valorously across a broad rolling down, and about half a mile farther on he came to a little shed. In the shed were a fire, and a man, and a pig; in the fire was an iron, and the pig was tied by a rope to a ring. Bertie saw the man take the red-hot iron and go up to the pig: Bertie's face grew blanched with horror.

"Stop, stop! what are you doing to the pig?" he

screamed, as he ran in to the man, who looked up and stared.

"I be branding the pig. Get out, or I'll brand you!" he cried. Bertie held his ground; his eyes were flashing.

"You wicked, wicked man! Do you not know that poor pig was made by God?"

"Dunno," said the wretch, with a grin. "She'll be eat by men, come Candlemas! I be marking of her, 'cos I'll turn her out on the downs with t'other. Git out, youngster! you've no call here."

Bertie planted himself firmly on his feet, and doubled his little fists.

"I will not see you do such a cruelty to a poor dumb thing," he said, while he grew white as death, "*I will not.*"

The man scowled and yet grinned.

"Will you beat me, little Hop-o'-my-thumb?"

Bertie put himself before the poor black pig, who was squealing from mere fright and the scorch of the fire.

"You shall not get the pig without killing me first. You are a cruel man."

The man grew angry.

"Tell you what, youngster: I've a mind to try the jumping-irons on you for your impudence. You look like a drowned white kitten. Clear off, if you don't want to taste something right red hot."

Bertie's whole body grew sick, but he did not move and he did not quail.

"I would rather you did it to me than to this poor thing," he answered.

"I'm blowed!" said the man, relaxing his wrath from sheer amazement. "Well, you're a good plucked one, you are."

"I do not know what you mean," said Bertie, a little haughtily; "but you shall not hurt the pig."

"Darn me!" yelled the man; "I'll burn you, sure as you live, if you don't kneel on your bare bones and beg my pardon."

"I will not do that."

"You won't beg my pardon for cheeking me?"

"No: you are a wicked man."

Bertie's eyes closed; he grew faint; he fully believed that in another instant he would feel the hissing fire of the brand. But he did not yield.

The man's hand dropped to his side.

"You *are* a plucked one," he said, once more. "Lord, child, it was a joke. You're such a rare game un, to humor you, there, I'll let the crittur go without marking her. But you're a rare little fool, if you're not an angel down from on high."

Bertie's eyes filled with tears. He held his hand out royally to be kissed, as he was used to do at Avillion.

The big, black-looking man crushed it in his own brown paw.

"My! you're a game un!" he muttered, with wonder and awe.

"And you will never, never, never burn pigs any more?" said Bertie, searching his face with his own serious large eyes.

"I'll ne'er brand this un," said the man, with a shamefaced laugh. "Lord, little sir, you're the first as ever got as much as that out of me!"

"But you *never* must do it," said Bertie, solemnly. "It is wicked of you, and God is angry; and it is very mean for you, such a big man and so strong, to hurt a defenceless dumb thing. You must *never* do it."

"What is your name, little master?" said the big man, humbly.

"They call me Avillion."

"William? Then I'll say William all the days of my life at my prayers o' Sundays," said the man, with some emotion, and murmured to himself, "Such a game un I never seed."

"Thanks very much," said Bertie, gently, and then he lifted his hat politely, and went out of the shed before the man could recover from his astonishment. When the little Earl looked back, he saw the giant pouring water on the fire, and the pig was loose.

"I *was* afraid," thought Bertie. "But he should have burnt me all up every bit: I never would have given in."

And something seemed to say in his ear, "The loveliest thing in all the world is courage that goes hand in hand with mercy; and these two together can work miracles, like magicians."

By this time Bertie, except for a certain inalienable grace and refinement that were in his little face and figure, had few marks of a young gentleman. His snowy serge was smirched and stained with blackberries; his red stockings, from the sea-water and the field-mud, had none of their original color; his hat had been bent and crumpled by his fall, and his hair was rough. Nobody passing him could have dreamt

that this sorry wanderer was a little earl. Nevertheless, when he had been dressed in his little court suit and had been taken to see the queen once at Balmoral, he had never been a quarter so proud nor a tenth part so happy. He longed to meet Cromwell, and Richard the Third, and Gessler, and Nero. He began to feel like all the knights he had ever read of, and those were many.

Presently he saw a little maiden weeping. She was an ugly little maiden, with a shock head of red hair, and a wide mouth, and a brickdust skin; but she was crying. In his present heroic mood, he could not pass her by unconsoled.

"Little girl, why do you cry?" he said, stopping in the narrow green lane.

She looked at him out of a sharp little eye, and her face puckered up afresh.

"I'se going to schule, little master!"

"To school, do you mean? And why does that make you cry? Can you read?"

"Naw," said the maiden, and sobbed loudly.

"Then why are you not glad to go and learn?" said Bertie, in his superior wisdom.

"There's naebody to do nowt at home," said the red-haired one, with a howl. "Mother's abed sick, and Tam's hurt his leg, and who'll mind baby? He'll tumble the kittle o'er hisself, I know he will, and he'll be scalt to death, 'll baby!"

"Dear, dear!" said Bertie, sympathetically. "But why do you go to school then?"

"'Cos I isn't thirteen," sobbed the shock-haired nymph: "I'se only ten. And daddy was had up las

"LITTLE GIRL, WHY DO YOU CRY?" HE SAID

week and pit in prison 'cos he kept me at home. And if I ain't at home, who'll mind baby, and who'll bile the taters, and who'll——? Oh, how I wish I was thirteen!"

Bertie did not understand. He had never heard of the School Board.

"What does your father do?" he asked.

"Works i' brick-field. All on us work i' brick-field. I can take baby to brick-field; he sit in the clay beautiful, but they awn't let me take him to schule, and he'll be scalt, I know he'll be scalt. He'll allers get a-nigh the kittle if he can."

"But it is very shocking not to know how to read," said the little Earl, very gravely. "You should have learned that as soon as you could speak. I did."

"Maybe yours aren't brick-field folk," said the little girl, stung by her agony to sarcasm. "I've allers had a baby to mind, ever since I toddled; first 'twas Tam, and then 'twas Dick, and now 'tis this un. I dunno want to read; awn't make bricks a-readin'."

"Oh, but you will learn such beautiful things," said Bertie. "I do think, you know, that you *ought* to go to school."

"So the gemman said as pit dad in th' lock-up," said the recalcitrant one, doggedly. "Butiful things aren't o' much count, sir, when one's belly's empty. I oodn't go to the blackguds now, if 'tweren't as poor dad says as how I must, 'cos they lock him up."

"It seems very hard to lock him up," said Bertie, with increasing sympathy; "and I think you ought to obey him and go. I will see if I can find the baby. Where do you live?"

She pointed vaguely over the copses and pastures: "Go on a mile, and you'll see Jim Bracken's cottage; but, Lord love you! *you*'ll ne'er manage baby."

"I will try," said Bertie, sweetly. His fancy as well as his charity was stirred; for he had never, that he knew of, seen a baby. "But indeed you should go to school."

"I'm a-going," said the groaning and blowsy heroine with a last sob, and then she set off running as quickly as a pair of her father's boots, ten times too large, allowed her, her slate and her books making a loud clatter as she struggled on her way.

He was by this time very tired, for he was not used to such long walks; but curiosity and compassion put fresh spirit into his heart, and his small legs pegged valorously over the rough ground, the red stockings and the silver buckles becoming by this time much begrimed with mud.

He knocked at one cottage door, and saw only a very cross old woman, who flourished a broom at him.

"No, it bean't Jim Bracken's. Get you gone!—you look like a runaway."

Now, a runaway he was; and, as truth when we are guilty is always even as a two-edged sword, Bertie colored up to the roots of his hair, and bolted off as fast as he could to the only other cottage visible, beyond a few acres of mangel-wurzel and all the lucern family, which the little Earl fancied were shamrocks. For he was far on in Euclid, could speak German well, and could spell through Tacitus fairly, but about the flowers of the field and the grasses no one had ever thought it worth while to tell him anything at all.

Indeed, to tell you the truth, I do not think his tutors knew anything about them themselves.

This other cottage was so low, so covered up in its broken thatch, which in turn was covered with lichen, and was so tumble-down and sorrowful-looking, that Bertie thought it was a ruined cow-shed. However, it stood where the school-girl had pointed: so he took his courage in both hands, as we say in French, and advanced to it. The rickety door stood open, and he saw a low miserable bed with a miserable woman lying on it; a shock-headed boy sprawled on the floor, another crouched before a fire of brambles and sods, and between the legs of this last boy was a strange, uncouth, shapeless object, which, but for the fact that it was crying loudly, never would have appeared to his astonished eyes as the baby for whom was prophesied a tragic and early end by the kettle. The boy who had this object in charge stared with two little round eyes.

"Mamsey, there's a young gemman," he said, in an awed voice.

Bertie took off his hat, and went into the room with his prettiest grace.

"If you please, are you very ill?" he said, in his little soft voice, to the woman in bed. "I met—I met—a little girl who was so anxious about the baby, and I said I would come and see if I could be of any use——"

The woman raised herself on one elbow, and looked at him with eager, haggard eyes.

"Lord, little sir, there's naught to be done for us; —leastways, unless you had a shillin' or two——"

"I have no money," murmured Bertie, feeling very

unlike a little earl in that moment. The woman gave a weary angry sigh and sank back indifferent.

"Can I do nothing?" said Bertie, wistfully.

"By golly!" said the boy on the floor, "unless you've got a few coppers, little master——"

"Coppers?" repeated the little Earl.

"Pence," said the boy, shortly; then the baby began to howl, and the boy shook it.

"Do please not make it scream so," said Bertie. "That is what you call the baby, is it not?"

"Iss," said the boy Dick, sullenly. "This here's baby, cuss him! and what bisness be he of yourn?"

For interference without coppers to follow was a barren intruder that he was disposed to resent.

"I thought I could amuse him," said Bertie, timidly. "I told your sister I would."

Dick roared into loud guffaws.

"Baby'd kick you into middle o' next week, you poor little puny spindle-shanks!" said this rude boy; and Bertie felt that he was very rude, though he had no idea what was meant by spindle-shanks.

The other boy, who was lying on his stomach,—a sadly empty little stomach,—here reversed his position and stared up at Bertie.

"I think you're a kind little gemman," he said, "and Dick's cross 'cos he's broke his legs, and we've had no vittles since yesternoon, and only a sup o' tea Peg made afore she went, and mother's main bad, that she be."

And tears rolled down this gentler little lad's dirty cheeks.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do?" said Bertie, with a

sigh: if he had only had the money and the watch that had fallen into the sea! He looked round him and felt very sick; it was all so dirty, so dirty!—and he had never seen dirt before; and the place smelt very close and sour, and the children's clothes were mere rags, and the woman was all skin and bone, on her wretched straw bed; and the unhappy baby was screaming loudly enough to be heard right across the sea to the French coast.

"Baby, poor baby, don't cry so!" said Bertie, very softly, and he dangled the ends of his red sash before its tearful eyes, and shook them up and down: the attention of the baby was arrested, it ceased to howl, and put out its hands, and began to laugh instead! Bertie was very proud of his success, and even the sullen Dick muttered, "Well, I never!"

The little Earl undid his scarf and let the baby pull it towards itself. Dick's eyes twinkled greedily.

"Master, that'd *sell* for summat!"

"Oh, you must not sell it," said the little Earl, eagerly. "It is to amuse the poor baby. And what pretty big eyes he has! how he laughs!"

"Your shoes 'ud sell," muttered Dick.

"Dick! don't, Dick! that's begging," muttered Tam. Bertie stared in surprise. To sell his shoes seemed as odd as to be asked to sell his hair or his hands. The woman opened her fading, glazing eyes.

"They're honest boys, little sir: you'll pardon of 'em; they've eat nothing since yesternoon, and then 'twas only a carrot or two, and boys is main hungry."

"And have you nothing?" said Bertie, aghast at the misery in this unknown world.

"How'd we have anything?" said the sick woman, grimly. "They've locked up my man, and Peg's sent to school while we starve; and nobody earns nothin', for Dick's broke his leg, and I've naught in my breasts for baby——"

"But would not somebody you work for—or the priest—?" began Bertie.

"Passon don't do nowt for us,—my man's a Methody; and at brick-field they don't mind us; if we be there, well an' good,—we work and get paid; and if we isn't there, well—some un else is. That's all." Then she sank back, gasping.

Bertie stood woe-begone and perplexed.

"Did you say my shoes would sell?" he murmured, very miserably, his mind going back to the history of St. Martin and the cloak.

Dick brightened up at once.

"Master, I'll get three shillin' on 'em, maybe more, down in village yonder."

"You mus'n't take the little gemman's things," murmured the mother, feebly; but faintness was stealing on her, and darkness closing over her sight.

"Three shillings!" said Bertie, who knew very little of the value of shillings; "that seems very little! I *think* they cost sovereigns. Could you get a loaf of bread with three shillings?"

"Gu-r-r-r!" grinned Dick, and Bertie understood that the guttural sound meant assent and rapture.

"But I cannot walk without shoes."

"Walk! yah! ye'll walk better. We niver have no shoes!" said Dick.

"Don't you, *really?*"

"Golly! no! Ye'll walk ten times finer; ye won't trip, nor stumble, nor nothin', and ye'll run as fast again."

"Oh, no, I shall not," murmured Bertie, and he was going to say that he would be ashamed to be seen without shoes, only he remembered that, as these boys had none, that would not be kind. A desperate misery came over him at the thought of being shoeless, but then he reasoned with himself, "To give was no charity if it cost you nothing: did not the saints strip themselves to the uttermost shred for the poor?"

He stooped and took off his shoes with the silver buckles on them, and placed them hastily on the floor.

"Take them, if they will get you bread," he said, with the color mounting in his face.

Dick seized them with a yell of joy. "Tarnation that I can't go mysel'. Here, Tam, run quick and sell 'em to old Nan; and get bread, and meat, and potatoes, and milk for baby, and Lord knows what; p'raps a gill of gin for mammy."

"I don't think we ought to rob little master, Dick," murmured little Tam. His brother hurled a crutch at him, and Tam snatched up the pretty shoes and fled.

"My blazes, sir," said Dick, with rather a shamefaced look, "if you'd a beast like a lot of fire gnawing at your belly all night long, yer wouldn't stick at nowt to get bread."

Bertie only imperfectly comprehended. The baby, tired of the sash, began to cry again; and Dick, grown good-natured, danced it up and down.

"How old are you?" said Bertie.

'Nigh on eight," said Dick.

"Dear me!" sighed the little Earl; this rough, masterful, coarse-tongued boy seemed like a grown man to him.

"You won't split on us?" said Dick, sturdily.

"What is that?" asked Bertie.

"Not tell anybody you give us the shoes: there'd be a piece of work."

"As if one *told* when one did any kindness!" murmured Bertie, with a disgust he could not quite conceal. "I mean, when one does one's duty."

"But what'll you gammon 'em with at home?—they'll want to know what you've done with your shoes."

"I am not going home," said the little Earl, and there was a something in the way he spoke that silenced Dick's tongue,—which he would have called his clapper.

"What in the world be the little swell arter?" thought Dick.

Bertie meanwhile, with some awe and anxiety, was watching the livid face of the sick woman: he had never seen illness or death, but it seemed to him that the was very ill indeed.

"Are you not anxious about your mother?" he asked of the rough boy.

"Yes," said Dick, sulkily, with the water coming in his eyes. "Dad's in the lock-up: that's wuss still, young sir."

"Not worse than death," said Bertie, solemnly. "He will come back."

"Oh, she'll come round with a drop of gin and a sup

of broth," said Dick, confidently. "'Tis all hunger and frettin', hers is."

"I am glad I gave my shoes," thought Bertie. Then there was a long silence, broken only by the hissing of the green brambles on the fire and the yelps of the baby.

"Maybe, sir," said Dick, after a little, "you'd put the saucepan on? I can't move with this here leg. If you'd pit some water out o' kittle in him, he'll be ready for cookin' when the vittles come."

"I will do that," said Bertie, cheerfully, and he set the saucepan on by lifting it with both hands: it was very black, and its crock came off on his knickerbockers. Then, by Dick's directions, he found a pair of old wooden bellows, and blew on the sticks and sods; but this he managed so ill that Dick wriggled himself along the floor closer to the fire and did it himself.

"You're a gaby!" he said to his benefactor.

"What is that?" said Bertie.

But Dick felt that it was more prudent not to explain.

In half an hour Tam burst into the room, breathless and joyous, his scruples having disappeared under the basket he bore.

"She gived me five shillin'!" he shouted; "and I's sure they's wuth a deal more, 'cos her eyes twinkled and winked, and she shoved me a peg-top in!"

"Gie us o't!" shrieked Dick, in an agony at being bound to the floor with all these good things before his sight.

Little Tam, who was very loyal, laid them all out

on the ground before his elder: two quartern loaves, two pounds of beef, onions, potatoes, a bit of bacon, and a jug of milk.

Dick poured some milk into an old tin mug, and handed it roughly to Bertie.

"Feed the baby, will yer, whiles Tam and me cooks?"

The little Earl took the can, and advanced to the formidable bundle of rags, who was screaming like a very hoarse raven.

"I think you should attend to your mother first," he said, gently, as the baby made a grab at the little tin pot, the look of which it seemed to know, and shook half the milk over itself.

"Poor mammy!" said Tam, who was gnawing a bit of bread; and, with his bread in one hand, he got up and put a little gin and water quite hot between his mother's lips. She swallowed it without opening her eyes or seeming to be conscious, and Tam climbed down from the bed again with a clear conscience.

"We'll gie her some broth," he said, manfully, while he and Dick, munching bread and raw bacon, tumbled the beef in a lump into the saucepan, drowned in water with some whole onions, in the common fashion of cottage-cooking. The baby, meanwhile, was placidly swallowing the milk that the little Earl held for it very carefully, and, when that was done, accepted a crust that he offered it to suck.

The two boys were crouching before the crackling fire, munching voraciously, and watching the boiling of the old black pot. They had quite forgotten their benefactor.

"My! What'll Peg say when she's to home?" chuckled Tam.

"She'll say that she'd ha' cooked better," growled Dick. "Golly! ain't the fat good?"

Bertie stood aloof, pleased, and yet sorrowful because they did not notice him.

Even the baby had so completely centred its mind in the crust that it had abandoned all memory of the red scarf.

Bertie looked on a little while, but no one seemed to remember him. The boys' eyes were glowing on the saucepan, and their cheeks were filled out with food as the cherubs in his chapel at home were puffed out with air as they blew celestial trumpets.

He went to the door slowly, looked back, and then retreated into the sunshine.

"It would be mean to put them in mind of me," he thought, as he withdrew.

Suddenly a sharp pain shot through him: a stone had cut his unshod foot.

"Oh, dear me! how ever shall I walk without any shoes or boots!" he thought, miserably; and he was very nearly bursting out crying.

On the edge of these fields was a wood,—a low, dark, rolling wood,—which looked to the little Earl, who missed his own forests, inviting and cool and sweet. By this time it was getting towards noon, and the sun was hot, and he felt thirsty and very tired. He was sad, too: he was glad to have satisfied those poor hungry children, but their indifference to him when they were satisfied was chilling and melancholy.

"But then we ought not to do a kindness that we

may be thanked," he said to himself. "It is a proper punishment to me, because I wished to be thanked, which was mean."

So he settled, as he usually did, that it was all his own fault.

Happily for him, the ground was soft with summer dust, and so he managed to get along the little path that ran from the cottage through the lucern-fields, and from there the path became grass, which was still less trying to his little red stockings.

Yet he was anxious and troubled; he felt heavily weighted for his battle with the world without any shoes on, and he felt he must look ridiculous. For the first time, St. Martin did not seem to him so very much of a hero, because St. Martin's gift was only a cloak. Besides, without his sash, the band of his knickerbockers could be seen; and he was afraid this was indecent.

Nevertheless, he went on bravely, if lamely. Believe me, nothing sets the world more straight than thinking that what is awry in it is one's self.

The wood, which was a well-known spinney famous for pheasants, was reached before very long, though with painful effort. It was chiefly composed of old hawthorn-trees and blackthorn, with here and there a larch or holly. The undergrowth was thick, and the sunbeams were playing at bo-peep with the shadows. Far away over the fields and thorns was a glimmer of blue water, and close around were all manner of ferns, of foxgloves, of grasses, of boughs. The tired little Earl sank downward under one of the old thorns with feet that bled. A wasp had stung him, too, through

his stocking, and the stung place was smarting furiously. "But how much more Christ and the saints suffered!" thought Bertie, seriously and piously, without the smallest touch of vanity.

Lying on the moss under all that greenery, he felt refreshed and soothed, although the foot the wasp had stung throbbed a good deal.

There were all sorts of pretty things to see: the pheasants, who were lords of the manor till October came round, did not mind him in the least, and swept smoothly by with their long tails like court mantles sweeping the grass. Blackbirds, those cheeriest of all birds, pecked at worms and grubs quite near him. Chaffinches were looking for hairs under the brambles to make their second summer nest with. Any hairs serve their purpose,—cows', horses', or dogs'; and if they get a tuft of hare-skin or rabbit-fur they are furnished for the year. A pair of little white-throats were busy in a low bush, gathering the catch-weed that grew thickly there, and a goldfinch was flying away with a lock of sheep's wool in his beak. There were other charming creatures, too: a mole was hurrying to his underground castle, a nuthatch was at work on a rotten tree-trunk, and a gray, odd-looking bird was impaling a dead field-mouse on one of the thorn-branches. Bertie did not know that this gentleman was but the gray shrike, once used in hawking; indeed, he did not know the names or habits of any of the birds; and he lay still hidden in the ferns, and watched them with delight and mute amazement. There were thousands of such pretty creatures in his own woods and brakes at home, but then he was never alone: he

was always either walking with Father Philip or riding with William, and in neither case was he allowed to stop and loiter and lie in the grass, and the sonorous voice of the priest scattered these timid dwellers in the greenwood as surely as did the tread of the pony's hoofs and the barking of Ralph.

"When I am a man I will pass all my life out of doors, and I will get friends with all these pretty things, and ask them what they are doing," he thought; and he was so entranced in this new world hidden away under the low hawthorn boughs of this spinney that he quite forgot he had lost his shoes and did not know where he would sleep when night came. He had quite forgotten his own existence, indeed; and this is just the happiness that comes to us always, when we learn to love the winged and four-footed brethren that Nature has placed so near us, and whom, alas! we so shamefully neglect when we do not do even worse and persecute them. Bertie was quite oblivious that he was a runaway, who had started with a very fine idea or finding out who it was that kept him in prison, and giving him battle wherever he might be: he was much more interested in longing to know what the great gray shrike was, and why it hung up the mouse on the thorn and flew away. If you do not know any more than he did, I may tell you that the shrikes are like your father, and like their game when it has been many days in the larder. It is one of the few ignoble tastes in which birds resemble mankind.

The shrike flew away to look for some more mice, or frogs, or little snakes, or cockroaches, or beetles, for he is a very useful fellow indeed in the woods, though

the keepers are usually silly and wicked enough to try and kill him. His home and his young ones were above in the thicket, and he had stuck all round their nests insects of all kinds: still, he was a provident bird, and was of opinion that every one should work while it is day.

When the shrike flew away after a bumble-bee, the little Earl fell asleep: what with fatigue, and excitement, and the heat of the sun, a sound, dreamless slumber fell upon him there among the birds and the sweet smell of the May buds; and the goldfinch sang to him, while he slept, such a pretty song that he heard it though he was so fast asleep. The goldfinch, though, did not sing for him one bit in the world; he sang for his wife, who was sitting among her callow brood hidden away from sight under the leaves, and with no greater anxiety on her mind than fear of a possible weasel or rat gnawing at her nest from the bottom.

When the little Earl awoke, the sun was not full and golden all about him as it had been; there were long shadows slanting through the spinney, and there was a great globe descending behind the downs of the western horizon. It was probably about six in the evening. Bertie could not tell, for, unluckily for him, he had always had a watch to rely upon, and had never been taught to tell the hour from the "shepherd's hour-glass" in the field-flowers, or calculate the time of day from the length of the shadows. Even now, though night was so nigh, the thought of where he should find a bed did not occur to him, for he was absorbed in a little boy who stood before him,—a very

miserable little black-haired, brown-cheeked boy, who was staring hard at him.

"Now, he, I am sure, is as poor as Dick and Tam," thought the little Earl, "and I have nothing left to give him."

The little boy was endeavoring to hide behind his back a bright bundle of ruffled feathers, and in his other hand he held a complicated arrangement of twine and twigs with a pendent noose.

That Bertie did know the look of, for he had seen his own keepers destroy such things in his own woods, and had heard them swear when they did so. So his land-owner's instincts awoke in him, though the land was not his.

"Oh, little boy," he said, rubbing his eyes and springing to his feet, "what a wicked, wicked little boy you are! You have been snaring a pheasant!"

The small boy, who was about his age, looked frightened and penitent: he saw his accuser was a little gentleman.

"Please, sir, don't tell on me," he said, with a whimper. "I'll gie ye the bird if ye won't tell on me."

"I do not want the bird," said Bertie, with magisterial gravity. "You are a wicked little boy to offer it to me. It is not your own, and you have killed it. You are a *thief!*"

"Please, sir," whimpered the little poacher, "dad allus tooked 'em like this."

"Then he is a thief too," said Bertie.

"He was a good un to me," said the small boy, and then fairly burst out sobbing. "He was a good un to

me, and he's dead a year come Lady-day, and mother she's main bad, and little Susie's got the croup, and there's nowt to eat to home; and I hear Susie cryin', cryin', cryin', and so I gae to cupboard where dad's old tackle be kep, and I gits out this here, and says I to myself, maybe I'll git one of them birds i' spinney, 'cos they make rare broth, and we had a many on 'em when dad was alive, and Towser."

"Who was Towser?"

"He was our lurcher; keeper shot him; he'd bring of 'em in his mouth like a Chrisen; and gin ye'll tell on me, they'll clap me in prison like they did dad, and it's birch rods they'd give yer, and mother's nowt but me."

"I do not know who owns this property," said Bertie, in his little sedate way, "so I could not tell the owner, and I should not wish to do it if I could; but still it is a very wicked thing to snare birds at all, and when they are game-birds it is *robbery*."

"I know as how they makes it so," demurred the poacher's son. "But dad said as how——"

"No one makes it so," said Bertie, with a little righteous anger; "it *is* so: the birds are not yours, and so, if you take them, you are a thief."

The boy put his thumb in his mouth and dangled his dead pheasant.

A discussion on the game-laws was beyond his powers, nor was even Bertie conscious of the mighty subject he was opening, though the instincts of the landowner were naturally in him, and it seemed to him so shocking to find a boy with such views as this as to *meum* and *tuum*, that he almost fancied the sun would

fall from the sky. The sun, however, glowed on, low down in the wood beyond a belt of firs, and the green downs, and the gray sea; and the little sinner stood before him, fascinated by his appearance and frightened at his words.

"Do you know who owns this coppice?" asked Bertie; and the boy answered him, reluctantly,—

"Yes: Sir Henry."

"Then, what you must do," said Bertie, "is to go directly with that bird to Sir Henry, and beg his pardon, and ask him to forgive you. Go at once. That is what you must do."

The boy opened eyes and mouth in amaze.

"That I won't never do," he said, doggedly: "I'd be took up to the lodge afore I'd open my mouth."

"Not if I go with you," said Bertie.

"Be you one of the fam'ly, sir?"

"No," said Bertie, and then was silent in some confusion, for he bethought him that, without any shoes on, he might also be arrested at the lodge gates.

"I thought as not, 'cos you're barefoot," said the brown-cheeked boy, with a little contempt supplying the place of courage. "Dunno who you be, sir, but seems to I as you've no call to preach to me: you be a-trespassin' too."

Bertie colored.

"I am not doing any harm," he said, with dignity; "you are: you have been stealing. If you are not really a wicked boy, you will take the pheasant straight to that gentleman, and beg him to forgive you, and I dare say he will give you work."

"There's no work for my dad's son," said the little

poacher, half sadly, half sullenly: "the keepers are all agen us: 'tis as much as mother and me and Susie can do to git a bit o' bread."

"What work can you do?"

"I can make the gins," said the little sinner, touching the trap with pride. "Mostwhiles, I never come out o' daylight; but all the forenoon Susie was going off her head, want o' summat t' eat."

"I'm sorry for Susie and you," said the little Earl, with sympathy. "But indeed, indeed, nothing can excuse a theft, or make God——"

"The keepers!" yelled the boy, with a scream like a hare's, and he dashed head-foremost into the bushes, casting on to Bertie's lap the gin and the dead bird. Bertie was so surprised that he sat perfectly mute and still: the little boy had disappeared as fast as a rabbit bolts at sight of a ferret. Two grim big men with dogs and guns burst through the hawthorn, and one of them seized the little Earl with no gentle hand.

"You little blackguard! you'll smart for this," yelled the big man. "Treadmill and birch rod, or I'm a Dutchman."

Bertie was so surprised, still, that he was silent. Then, with his little air of innocent majesty, he said, simply, "You are mistaken: I did not kill the bird."

Now, if Bertie had had his usual nicety of apparel, or if the keeper had not been in a fuming fury, the latter would have easily seen that he had accused and apprehended a little gentleman. But no one in a violent rage ever has much sense or sight left to aid him, and Big George, as this keeper was called, did not notice that his dogs were smelling in a friendly way at

his prisoner, but only saw that he had to do with a pale-faced lad without shoes, and very untidy and dusty-looking, who had snares and a snared pheasant at his feet.

Before Bertie had even seen him take a bit of cord out of his pocket, he had tied the little Earl's hands behind him, picked up the pheasant and the trap, and given some directions to his companion. The real culprit was already a quarter of a mile off, burrowing safely in the earth of an old fox killed in February,—a hiding-place with which he was very familiar.

Bertie, meanwhile, was quite silent. He was thinking to himself, "If I tell them another boy did it, they will go and look for him, and catch him, and put him in prison; and then his mother and Susie will be so miserable,—more miserable than ever. I think I ought to keep quiet. Jesus never said anything when they buffeted him."

"Ah, you little gallows-bird, you'll get it this time!" said the keeper, knotting the string tighter about his wrists, and speaking as if he had had the little Earl very often in such custody.

"You are a very rude man," said Bertie, with the angry color in his cheeks; but Big George heeded him not, being engaged in swearing at one of his dogs,—a young one, who was trotting after a rabbit.

"I know who this youngster is, Bob," he said to his companion: "he's the Radley shaver over from Blackgang."

Bertie wondered who the Radley shaver was that resembled him.

"He has the looks on him," said the other, prudently.

"Sir Henry's dining at Chigwell to-night, and he'll have started afore we get there," continued Big George. "Go you on through spinney far as Edge Pool, and I'll take and lock this here Radley up till morning. Blast his impudence,—a pheasant! think of the likes of it! A pheasant! If 't had been a rabbit, 't had been bad enough."

Then he shook his little captive vigorously.

Bertie did not say anything. He was not in trepidation for himself, but he was in an agony of fear lest the other boy should be found in the spinney.

"March along afore me," said Big George, with much savageness. "And if you tries to bolt, I'll blow your brains out and nail you to a barn-door along o' the owls."

The little Earl looked at him with eyes of scorn and horror.

"How dare you touch Athene's bird?"

"How dare I what, you little saucy blackguard?" thundered Big George, and fetched him a great box on the ears which made Bertie stagger.

"You are a very bad man," he said, breathlessly. "You are a very mean man. You are big, and so you are cruel: that is very mean indeed."

"You've the gift of the gab, little devil of a Radley," said the keeper, wrathfully; "but you'll pipe another tune when you feel the birch and pick oakum."

Bertie set his teeth tight to keep his words in: he walked on mute.

"You've stole some little gemman's togs as well

as my pheasant," said Big George, surveying him. "Why didn't you steal a pair of boots when you was about it?"

Bertie was still mute.

"I will not say anything to this bad man," he thought, "or else he will find out that it was not I."

The sun had set by this time, leaving only a silvery light above the sea and the downs: the pale long twilight of an English day had come upon the earth.

Bertie was very white, and his heart beat fast, and he was growing very hungry; but he managed to stumble on, though very painfully, for his courage would not let him repine before this savage man, who was mixed up in his mind with Bluebeard, and Thor, and Croquemitaine, and Richard III., and Nero, and all the ogres that he had ever met with in his reading, and who seemed to grow larger and larger and larger as the sky and earth grew darker.

Happily for his shoeless feet, the way lay all over grass-lands and mossy paths; but he limped so that the keeper swore at him many times, and the little Earl felt the desperate resignation of the martyr.

At last they came in sight of the keeper's cottage, standing on the edge of the preserves,—a thatched and gabled little building, with a light glimmering in its lattice window.

At the sound of Big George's heavy tread, a woman and some children ran out.

"Lord ha' mercy! George!" cried the wife. "What scarecrow have you been and got?"

"A Radley boy," growled George,—"one of the

cussed Radley boys at last,—and a pheasant snared took in his very hand!"

"You don't mean it!" cried his wife; and the small children yelled and jumped. "What'll be done with him, dad?" cried the eldest of them.

"I'll put him in fowl-house to-night," said Big George, "and up he'll go afore Sir Henry fust thing to morrow. Clear off, young uns, and let me run him in."

Bertie looked up in Big George's face.

"I had nothing to do with killing the bird," he said, in a firm though a faint voice. "You quite mistake. I am Lord Avillion."

"Stop your pipe, or I'll choke yer," swore Big George, enraged by what he termed the "darned cheek" of a Radley boy; and without more ado he laid hold of the little Earl's collar and lifted him into the fowl-house, the door of which was held open eagerly by his eldest girl.

There was a great flapping of wings, screeching of hens, and piping of chicks at the interruption, where all the inmates were gone to roost, and one cock set up his usual salutation to the dawn.

"That's better nor you'll sleep to-morrow night," said Big George, as he tumbled Bertie on to a truss of straw that lay there, when he went out himself, slammed the door, and both locked and barred it on the outside.

Bertie fell back on the straw, sobbing bitterly: his feet were cut and bleeding, his whole body ached like one great bruise, and he was sick and faint with hunger. "If the world be as difficult as this to live in,"

ne thought, "how ever do some people manage to live almost to a hundred years in it?" and to his eight-year-old little soul the prospect of a long life seemed so horrible that he sobbed again at the very thought of it. It was quite dark in the fowl-house; the rustling and fluttering of the poultry all around sounded mysterious and unearthly; the strong, unpleasant smell made him faint, and the pain in his feet grew greater every moment. He did not scream or go into convulsions; he was a brave little man, and proud; but he felt as if the long, lonely night there would kill him.

Half an hour, perhaps, had gone by when a woman's voice at the little square window said, softly, "Here is bread and water for you, poor boy; and I've put some milk and cheese, too, only my man mustn't know it."

Bertie with great effort raised himself, and took what was pushed through the tiny window; a mug of milk being lowered to him last by a large red fat hand, on which the light of a candle held without was glowing.

"Thanks very much," said the little Earl, feebly. "But, madam, I did not kill that bird, and indeed I am Lord Avillion."

The good woman went within to her lord, and said timidly to him, "George, are you sartin sure that there's a Radley boy? He do look and speak like a little gemman, and he do say as how he is one."

Big George called her bad names.

"A barefoot gemman!" he said, with a sneer. "You thunderin' fool! it's weazened-faced Vic Radley, as have been in our woods a hundred times if wunce,

HE SHARED IT WILLINGLY

though never could I slap eyes on him quick enough to pin him."

The good housewife took up her stocking-mending and said no more. Big George's arguments were sometimes enforced with the fist, and even with the pewter pot or the poker.

Meanwhile, the little Earl in the hen-house was so hungry that he drank the milk and ate the bread and cheese. Both were harder and rougher things than any he had ever tasted; but he had now that hunger which had made the boy on the stile relish the turnip, and, besides, another incident had occurred to give him relish for the food.

At the moment when he had sat down to drink the milk, there had tumbled out from behind the straw a round black-and-white object, unsteady on its legs, and having a very broad nose and a very woolly coat. The moon had risen by this time, and was shining in through the little square window, and by its beams Bertie could see this thing was a puppy,—a Newfoundland puppy some four months old. He welcomed it with as much rapture as ever Robert Bruce did the spider. It had evidently been awakened from its sleep by the smell of the food. It was a pleasant, companionable, warm and kindly creature; it knocked the bread out of his hand, and thrust its square mouth into his milk, but he shared it willingly, and had a hearty cry over it that did him good.

He did not feel all alone, now that this blundering, toppling, shapeless, amiable baby-dog had found its way to him. He caressed it in his arms and kissed it a great many times, and it responded much more grate-

fully than the human baby had done in Jim Bracken's cottage, and finally, despite his bleeding feet and his tired limbs, he fell asleep with his face against the pup's woolly body.

When he awoke, he could not remember what had happened. He called for Deborah, but no Deborah was there. The moon, now full, was shining still through the queer little dusky place; the figures of the fowls, rolled up in balls of feathers and stuck upon one leg, were all that met his straining eyes. He pulled the puppy closer and closer to him: for the first time in his life he felt really frightened.

"I never touched the pheasant," he cried, as loud as he could. "I am Lord Avillion! You have no right to keep me here. Let me out! let me out! let me out!"

The fowls woke up, and then cried and cackled and crowed, and the poor pup whined and yelped dolefully, but he got no other answer. Everybody in Big George's cottage was asleep, except Big George himself, who, with his revolver, his fowling-piece, and a couple of bull-dogs, was gone out again into the woods.

At home, Bertie in his pretty bed, that had belonged to the little Roi de Rome, had always had a soft light burning in a porcelain shade, and his nurse within easy call, and Ralph on the mat by the door. He had never been in the dark before, and he could hear unseen things moving and rustling in the straw, and he felt afraid of the white moonbeams shifting hither and thither and shining on the shape of the big Brahma cock till the great bird looked like a vulture. Once a rat ran swiftly across, and then the fowls shrieked, and

Bertie could not help screaming with them; but in a minute or two he felt ashamed of himself, for he thought, "A rat is God's creature as much as I am; and, as I have not done anything wrong, I do not think they will be allowed to hurt me."

Nevertheless, the night was very terrible. Without the presence of the puppy, no doubt, the little Earl would have frightened himself into convulsions and delirium; but the pup was so comforting to him, so natural, so positively a thing real and in no wise of the outer world, that Bertie kept down, though with many a sob, the panics of unreasoning terror which assailed him as the moon sailed away past the square loop-hole, and a great darkness seemed to wrap him up in it as though some giant were stifling him in a magic cloak.

The pup had not long been taken from its mother, and had been teased all day by the keeper's children, and was frightened, and whimpered a good deal, and cuddled itself close to the little Earl, who hugged it and kissed it in paroxysms of loneliness and longing for comfort.

With these long, horrible black hours, all sorts of notions and terrors assailed him; all he had ever read of dungeons, of enchanted castles, of entrapped princes, of Prince Arthur and the Duke of Rothsay, of the prisoner of Chillon and the Iron Mask, of every kind of hero, martyr, and wizard-bewitched captive, crowded into his mind with horrifying clearness, thronging on him with a host of fearful images and memories.

But this was only in his weaker moments. When he clasped the puppy and felt its warm wet tongue

lick his hair, he gathered up his courage: after all, he thought, Big George was certainly only a keeper,—not an ogre, or an astrologer, or a tyrant of Athens or of Rome.

So he fell off again, after a long and dreadful waking-time, into a fitful slumber, in which his feet ached and his nerves jumped, and the frightful visions assailed him just as much as when he was awake; and how that ghastly night passed by him, he never knew very well.

When he again opened his eyes there was a dim gray light in the fowl-house, and sharp in his ear was ringing the good-morrow of the Brahma chanticleer.

It was daybreak.

A round red face looked in at the square hole, and the voice of the keeper's wife said, "Little gemman, Big George will be arter ye come eight o'clock, and 't 'll go hard wi' yer. Say now, yer didn't snare the bird?"

"No," said Bertie, languidly, lying full length on the straw; he felt shivery and chilly, and very stiff and very miserable in all ways.

"But yer know who did!" persisted the woman. "Now, jist you tell me, and I'll make it all square with George, and he'll let you out, and we'll gie ye porridge, and we'll take ye home on the donkey."

The little Earl was silent.

"Now, drat ye for a obstinate! I can't abide a obstinate," said the woman, angrily. "Who did snare the bird? jist say that; 't is all, and mighty little."

"I will not say that," said Bertie; and the woman slammed a wooden door that there was to the loop-

hole, and told him he was a mule and a pig, and that she was not going to waste any more words about him; she should let the birds out by the bars. What she called the bars, which were two movable lengths of wood at the bottom of one of the walls, did in point of fact soon slip aside, and the fowls all cackled and strutted and fluttered after their different manners, and bustled through the opening towards the daylight and the scattered corn, the Brahma cock having much ado to squeeze his plumage where his wives had passed.

"The puppy's hungry," said Bertie, timidly.

"Drat the puppy!" said the woman outside; and no more compassion was wrung out of her. The little Earl felt very languid, light-headed, and strange; he was faint, and a little feverish.

"Oh, dear, pup! what a night!" he murmured, with a burst of sobbing.

Yet it never occurred to him to purchase his liberty by giving up little guilty Dan.

Some more hours rolled on,—slow, empty, desolate, —filled with the whine of the pup for its mother, and the chirping of unseen martins going in and out of the roof above-head.

"I suppose they mean to starve me to death," thought Bertie, his thoughts clinging to the Duke of Rothsay's story.

He heard the tread of Big George on the ground outside, and his deep voice cursing and swearing, and the children running to and fro, and the hens cackling. Then the little Earl remembered that he was born of brave men, and must not be unworthy of them; and he rose, though unsteadily, and tried to pull his dis-

ordered dress together, and tried, too, not to look afraid.

He recalled Casabianca on the burning ship: Casabianca had not been so very much older than he.

The door was thrust open violently, and that big grim black man looked in. "Come, varmint!" he cried out; "come out and get your merits: birch and bread-and-water and Scripture-readin' for a good month, I'll go bail; and 't 'ud be a year if I wur the beak."

Then Bertie, on his little shaky shivering limbs, walked quite haughtily towards him and the open air, the puppy waddling after him. "You should not be so very rough and rude," he said: "I will go with you. But the puppy wants some milk."

Big George's only answer was to clutch wildly at Bertie's clothes and hurl him anyhow, head first, into a little pony-cart that stood ready. "Such tarnation cheek I never seed," he swore; "but all them Radley imps are as like one to t' other as so many ribston-pippins,—all the gift o' the gab and tallow-faces!"

Bertie, lying very sick and dizzy in the bottom of the cart, managed to find breath to call out to the woman on the door-step, "Please do give the puppy something; it has been so hungry all night."

"That's no Radley boy," said the keeper's wife to her eldest girl as the cart drove away. "Only a little gemman 'ud ha' thought of the pup. Strikes me, lass, your daddy's put a rod in pickle for hisself along o' his tantrums and tivies."

It was but a mile and a half from the keeper's cottage to the mansion of the Sir Henry who was owner of these lands; and the pony spun along at a swing

trot, and Big George, smoking and rattling along, never deigned to look at his prisoner.

"Another poachin' boy, Mr. Mason?" said the woman who opened the lodge gates; and Big George answered, heartily,—

"Ay, ay, a Radley imp caught at last. Got the bird on him, and the gin too. What d'ye call that?"

"I call it like your vigilance, Mr. Mason," said the lodge-keeper. "But, lawks! he do look a mite!"

Big George spun on up the avenue with the air of a man who knew his own important place in the world, and the little cart was soon pulled up at the steps of a stately Italian-like building.

"See Sir Henry to wunce: poachin' case," said Big George to the footman lounging about the doorway.

"Of course, Mr. Mason. Sir Henry said as you was to go to him directly."

"Step this way," said one of the men; and Big George proceeded to haul Bertie out of the cart as unceremoniously as he had thrown him in; but the little Earl, although his head spun and his shoeless feet ached, managed to get down himself, and staggered across the hall.

"A Radley boy!" said Big George, displaying him with much pride. "All the spring and all the winter I've been after that weazen-faced varmint, and now I've *got* him."

"Sir Henry waits," said a functionary; and Big George marched into a handsome library, dragging his captive behind him, towards the central writing-table, at which a good-looking elderly gentleman was sitting.

Arrived before his master, the demeanor of Big George underwent a remarkable change; he cringed, and he pulled his lock of hair, and he scraped about with his leg in the humblest manner possible, and proceeded to lay the dead pheasant and the trap and gear upon the table.

"Took him in the ac', Sir Henry," he said, with triumph piercing through deference. "I been after him ages; he's a Radley boy, the little gallows-bird; he's been snarin' and dodgin' and stealin' all the winter long, and here we've got him."

"He is very small,—quite a child," said Sir Henry, doubtingly, trying to see the culprit.

"He's stunted in his growth along o' wickedness, sir," said Big George, very positively; "but he's old in wice; that's what he is, sir,—old in wice."

At that moment Bertie managed to get in front of him, and lifted his little faint voice.

"He has made a mistake," he said, feebly: "I never killed your birds at all, and I am Lord Avillion."

"Good heavens! you thundering idiot!" shouted Sir Henry, springing to his feet. "This is the little Earl they are looking for all over the island, and all over the country! My dear little fellow, how can I ever——"

His apologies were cut short by Bertie dropping down in a dead faint at his feet, so weak was he from cold, and hunger, and exhaustion, and unwonted exposure.

It was not very long, however, before all the alarmed household, pouring in at the furious ringing of their master's bell, had revived the little Earl, and brought

him to his senses none the worse for the momentary eclipse of them.

"Please do not be angry with your man," murmured Bertie, as he lay on one of the wide leathern couches. "He meant to do his duty; and please —will you let me buy the puppy?"

Of course Sir Henry would not allow the little Earl to wander any farther afield, and of course a horseman was sent over in hot haste to apprise his people, misled by the boat-lad, who, frightened at his own share in the little gentleman's escape, had sworn till he was hoarse that he had seen Lord Avillion take a boat for Rye.

So Bertie's liberty was nipped in the bud, and very sorrowfully and wistfully he strayed out on to the rose-terrace of Sir Henry's house, awaiting the coming of his friends. The puppy had been fetched, and was tumbling and waddling solemnly beside him; yet he was very sad at heart.

"What are you thinking of, my child?" said Sir Henry, who was a gentle and learned man.

Bertie's mouth quivered.

"I see," he said, hesitatingly,—"I see *I* am nothing. It is the title they give me, and the money I have got, that make the people so good to me. When I am only *me*, you see how it is."

And the tears rolled down his face, which he had heard called "wizen" and "puny" and likened to tallow.

"My dear little fellow," said his grown-up companion, tenderly, "there comes a day when even kings are stripped of all their pomp, and lie naked and stark;

it is then that which they have done, not that which they have been, that will find them grace and let them rise again."

"But I am nothing!" said Bertie, piteously. "You see, when the people do not know who I am, they think me nothing at all."

"I don't fancy Peggy and Dan will think so when we tell them everything," said the host. "We are all of us nothing in ourselves, my child; only, here and there we pluck a bit of lavender,—that is, we do some good thing or say some kind word,—and then we get a sweet savor from it. You will gather a great deal of lavender in your life, or I am mistaken."

"I will try," said Bertie, who understood.

So, off the downs that day, and in the pleasant hawthorn woods of the friendly little Isle, he plucked two heads of lavender,—humility and sympathy. Believe me, they are worth as much as was the moly of Ulysses.